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1. Life and works of Emily Dickinson.
2. Life and works of Elinor Wylie.
3. Contrast and similarity in their works.

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Thesis

I Life and Works of Emily Dickinson

II Life and Works of Elinor Wylie

III Contrast and Similarity in Their Works

Submitted by

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B.L.I., Emerson College, 1935

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the
degree of Master of Education
1936

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O U T L I N E

of

Emily Dickinson and Elinor Wylie

Chapter One. Page

Introduction .....
(a) The Theme of Poetry 1
(b) Early Life of Emily Dickinson 2
(c) Emily Dickinson as a recluse 4
(d) Poems reflecting love 5
(e) Religious poetry 13
(f) Poetry reflecting moods 17
(g) Poetry reflecting Imagisn 25
(h) A "toast to Emily" by Dean Howells 29

Chapter Two - Part I

(a) Life of Elinor Wylie 31
(b) Poems from "Nets To Catch The Wind." 35
(c) Poems from "Black Armour." 36
(d) Poems from "Trivial Breath." 37
(e) Sonnets from "Angels and Earthly Creatures" 39
(f) William Rose Benet's estimate of Elinor Wylie as a poet 53

Chapter Two - Part II

Prose Works of Elinor Wylie

(a) Elinor Wylie as a Prose Writer 54
(b) Jennifer Lorn 54
(c) The Venetian Glass Nephew 58
(d) The Orphan Angel 62
(e) Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard 66
(f) Style of Elinor Wylie's Prose Works 68

Chapter Three

Comparison and Contrast in

(a) Lives of Emily Dickinson and Elinor Wylie .. 69
(b) Works of Emily Dickinson and Elinor Wylie .. 71
(c) Conclusion 95

Bibliography ..... END.

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"If I read a book and it leaves my
whole body so no fire can ever warm
me, I know that is poetry.

If I feel physically as if the top of
my head were taken off, I know that
is poetry.

These are the only ways I know of - are
there any other ways? "

Emily Dickinson.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

* * * * * * * *

The Theme Of Poetry

"Whenever the soul comes vividly in contact with any fact, truth or existence, which it realizes and takes home to itself with more than common intensity, out of that meeting of the soul and its object there arises a thrill of job, a glow of emotion; and the expression of that glow, that thrill, is poetry."

Shairp.

Poetry is to the mind what religion is to the soul. It is an uplifting art that is enjoyed by all. Its beauties delight us if we enter into it with reverence and not in a mood of amusement. To take a poem into our lives and be engrossed by it requires not only an effort of the mind and will but a sympathetic response of the soul. Then it will speak from the heart of the poet to the heart of the reader either as a spontaneous expression of an unrestrained feeling, or a profound thought touched by emotion.

The poet does not see with human eyes nor does he hear with human ears. He lives in a world of dreams, of imagination. He interprets Nature as something real and alive. He detects beauties and radiances where others see only commonplace realities. He is inspired. His verse appeals to the ear by its melodious combinations of sounds, and by the regular recurrence of similar sounds in rhymes, or by alliteration. These sounds are soothing and harmonious. His theme has something that appeals to every mood. The art of the poet attracts the mind and impresses it more effectively than any other art is able to do.

E M I L Y D I C K I N S O N

After many years of obscurity, misunderstanding, and lack of appreciation, Emily Dickinson has finally stepped from the austere background of Puritan restraint into the middle of the nineteenth century and taken her place in the ranks of our great American poets. Even with wrangling magazine articles, all sorts of contradictory criticisms in literary books, and varying biographical sketches, she now claims her place among the eight or nine of the most important poets of America.

There is little definitely known about Emily Dickinson. Even her editors and biographers have had long controversies about her life and her writings, and when they have failed to find anything real and true to explain her actions and her poetry they have supplied their own stories and interpretations to fill in the gaps. Most of their contributions hinges upon her different romances and her seclusion.

There is little to tell about her life, because her life was almost wholly that of her imagination, but whatever it has been possible to gather, here and there, that touches upon it helps us to interpret her moods, her philosophy, and her poetry. The discouraging thing that we meet in our search for definite information is that there is so much mystery surrounding her life that it overshadows her work, and makes it hard to understand. Mystery is the one thing especially noticeable throughout her poetry. The greatest mystery is not that of some unknown lover but that of her personality, and her ability

to write in the way she did. It hardly seems possible that this shy, secluded woman could by means of her verse have reached the hearts of so many people from whom she excluded herself in life. It is remarkable, too, that she was able to create such a comprehensive view of the universe and the facts connected with it because she lived in such a contracted sphere. We know that she lived in a world of reality and in a world of intuition also, and we wonder where she got the power to recognize and blend these two worlds. She was able to create conditions that were entirely independent of her own life and surroundings, and this she did most successfully.

She had a very limited knowledge of the outside world. She spent her life shut up in her father's house except when she was in her garden. She was born in the little college town of Amherst, Massachusetts, at the time when there were only about forty houses there and Amherst College was devoted entirely to religious training. The young people found their diversions in house parties, social calls, picnics, lectures and in attending the little church which was located about one mile outside the village. It was a community where cards and dancing were considered devices of the devil.

Emily came of a dignified, high-thinking New England family. Her father, Edward Dickinson, an eminent lawyer, was State Representative for a number of years and was treasurer of Amherst College for forty years. He had a remarkable influence over Emily.

As a girl, Emily was said to have been as romantic

and frivolous as the average young girl. She was mischievous and vivacious and was referred to as "that rascal Emily." She entered into the village life of Amherst and seemed to enjoy it. She was adored by her family and near-friends because of her wit and humor. Amy Lowell says of her that

> "She lived in an atmosphere of sermons, church sociables, and country newspapers."

Her life was as unusual and full of whims as her verse. Her family told of her that she was once chosen to drown four little kittens they wanted to get rid of. While they were at church she put them on a coal shovel and dropped them into the pickle jar in the basement. Upon their return from church Emily was scolded severely for her freakish deed whereupon she rushed to her room, locked herself in and stayed there until she thought that the matter would be dropped.

As this brilliant girl grew up she chose her friends from among men instead of women. She did not like the habits of girls of her time. Her aunt says she had many friends [including) "maturer friendships, literary, Platonic, Plutonic, ..., and at least one passionate attachment whose tragedy was due to the integrity of the lovers who scrupled to take their bliss at another's cost."

As years passed on she began to retire to herself more and more, and when she was only thirty-two years of age she had renounced her personal life; had withdrawn completely from the world and was nursing her moods in seclusion. Many people who lived in Amherst all their lives never saw Emily, although

she lived to be fifty-six years old. The village people referred to her as the one who

> "sent perennial roots and cookies with a cryptic note to neighbors and became in short the village oddity."

Quoted below is one of her poems she sent along with a bunch of flowers to a friend:

> I send two sunsets
> Day and I in competition ran,
> I finished two, and several stars
> While He was making one.
>
> His own is ampler -
> But, as I was saying to a friend,
> Mine is the more convenient
> To carry in the hand.

The above poem is a good example of the great imaginative power which was characteristic of her writings.

Her neighbors also called her

> "a weird recluse who often indulged in unconventional and sometimes incomprehensible messages."

She became known as a mysterious woman belonging to the aristocracy of Amherst and she was called "queer." Of this queerness Amy Lowell says:

> "No one knows what made her as she was. It was not due to her ancestry or early influence. She swept into a rather sombre milieu 'like a stray butterfly beating into the void, her luminous wings in vain' ."

Because she was odd, unnatural, superstitious and child-like in her actions, she was ridiculed and said to be on the verge of insanity. Many silly stories attached themselves to her personality. There is no question about the fact that she renounced the world, went into seclusion, ventured out only so far as her garden and always dressed in white, but the reason for her doing these things is not known.

Her garden was her pride and her solace for she took care of her flowers for her lover. She wrote a little verse for him:

> I tend my flowers for thee
> Sweet Absentee.

Her friends claim that her family objected to her becoming engaged to George Gould, a young college man, so she rejected him to all appearances but in her seclusion she kept up a long secret correspondence with him. She describes in a poem how she reads a letter from him that has been secretly delivered to her by her maid:

> The way I read a letter's this;
> The first I lock the door
> .....
> And then I go the farthest off
> To counteract a knock;
> And draw my little letter forth
> And softly pick its lock.

The frequent letters from this young man kept up her interest in life in her retirement. She wrote of him again:

> Peruse how infinite I am
> To - no one that you know!
> And sigh for lack of heaven - but not
> The heaven that the creeds bestow.

It is also claimed that her love for Captain Edward Bissell Hunt, the husband of her girlhood friend, Helen Hunt Jackson, caused her to write that she could not deviate from her high sense of duty and be

"the inevitable destruction of another woman's life."

So she wrote:

> So we must keep apart,
> You there, I here,
> With just the door ajar
> That oceans are,
> And prayer
> And that pale sustenance
> Despair!

Those near to her claim that Major Hunt was a great inspiration to her and she was very fond of him but in her straight-laced Puritanical background it was not the style for one young woman to steal the husband of another, so she hid her secret in her heart and wrote verses by the hundreds to try to quell that inner feeling.

Her aunt says that although in seclusion she continued always to confide in her sister-in-law, Sue, who was the only one who understood and sympathized with her, she requested Sue that it be a

"confidence sacredly guarded under all provocation."

That Major Hunt had an influence over her is shown in her vocabulary. While he was located at Key West, she referred to him in one of her poems as "the sea" also she frequently used the words "peninsular","island", "shore", "harbor",as well as numerous military terms in her poems.

Some who knew her point out the hypnotic influence of her father in her life and they suggest that her confinement was probably due to her desire to escape him or possibly to obey him. He did not want the home circle to be broken; he was jealous of her lovers; he objected to her getting married. Her biographers disagree on this point as in many other things. Genevieve Taggart thought that force had little weight with the girl and she quotes Emily as saying:

"No rack can torture me."

and

"Captivity's consciousness, so's liberty."

Mrs. Todd, however, believes that Emily was a recluse not because of her domineering father or because of her broken-up love affairs but because her nature demanded seclusion. She says:

> "It was as inevitable, as inherent as her nature, as for the hermit thrush to prefer the depths of the forest."

This might possibly explain her actions as she grew up but in her earlier days it would seem that she did consider herself a prisoner in her home for she wrote in her laboratory notebook:

> I never hear the word "escape"
> Without a quicker blood,
> A sudden expectation
> .....

Then she ends her stanza with reference to prison bars,

> But I tug childish at my bars -
> Only to fail again!

In many of her poems she expressed love for her father and she also showed his influence over her in some of the legal phrases she used. The following poem contains a number of them:

> Mine by the right of white selection!
> Mine by the royal seal!
> Mine by the sigh of the scarlet prison
> Bars cannot conceal!
>
> Mine here in vision and in veto!
> Mine, by the grave's repeal
> Titled, confirmed - delirious charter!
> Mine, while the ages steal!

There is no doubt but that she indulged in these legal terms because her father disliked poetic speech. He even objected to her writing poetry. She transformed her style so as to permit of strong verbs, formal, precise nouns - legal terms that might have an appeal to him.

Unquestionably she was a recluse by habit and temperament - "a hermit, a thinker, a poet"-and seclusion was not, after her maturity, a punishment to her. She herself said:

> "No one could ever punish a Dickinson by shutting her up alone."

This idea is borne out in her poem:

> The soul selects her own society,
> Then shuts the door;
> On her divine majority
> Obtrude no more.
>
> Unmoved she notes the chariot's pausing
> At her low gate;
> Unmoved an emperor is kneeling
> Upon her mat.
>
> I've known her from an ample nation
> Choose one;
> Then shut the valves of her attention
> Like stone.

So it may be concluded that she preferred solitude and was not lonely in her seclusion. What might have meant cruelty and confinement to some one else was simply voluntary exclusion to her. She says:

"It's just a turn - and freedom." The act of turning the key in the door allowed her to escape from the world. There was something in the outside world that she did not like. It might have been the sham and hollowness of the people, or perhaps she could not strike a level with ordinary companionship, or, what might be more probable, she needed the beauties of nature to encourage and harmonize with her. She needed the companionship of the birds, the trees, the flowers, the sunsets, the breezes and her own thoughts. These things all talked to her and she to them. She knew how to express the feelings many of us have but cannot express. To be alone was to shut out

all intrusion upon her visions and permit her free self-expression. She closed her heart and followed the dictates of her soul. She was rich in her own resources and delighted to think and work alone. She lived happily in the love, joys and sorrows of those who were dear to her. In her poems we note the love she expressed for friends, and her longing for the love of others. Love had its burdens and its mysteries but she was reaching out for it.

She avoided people and especially crowds. Her family say that she would sit up all night so that she might not miss seeing a circus pass by in covered wagons early in the morning. She was too shy to go into the street to see it as others did. This shyness showed itself in many ways. She was very fond of music and would often sit in the hall by herself to listen to a caller or even to a friend play on the piano in her own home, but she would not come into the room where the player was. She admits her shyness in the following verse:

> If archangels veil their faces
> Sacred diffidence my own.

Although Emily Dickinson was born, lived and died in Amherst, it was not generally known there during her life time that she wrote poetry. Only about four of her poems were printed before her death and this was much against her wish. She was apparently about eighteen when she wrote her first verse, or made it known to her sister and other members of the family that she was writing poetry. It was only by the merest chance that her poems have been saved. She requested that after her death all her personal papers and letters should be burned. Livinia, with the

desire to carry out her sister's wishes, burned several hundreds of manuscripts without reading them but she saved about two thousand poems which she found carefully stored away in an old bureau drawer, each rolled in the form of a parchment and tied with a tiny string.

It seemed to the printer to be a hopeless bit of work to try to print these verses that had been scribbled with pencil on the margins of newspapers, brown paper grocery bags, backs or flaps of envelopes, and on all sorts of scrappy old wrapping paper. None of her poems had titles nor were they dated, so the editors could not make an exact chronological arrangement of them. After carefully working over them for a long time, with the greatest difficulty, they grouped, named and published them.

It was about forty years after Miss Dickinson's death that Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a reformer, lecturer, writer and an author, in collaboration with Mabel Todd Loomis, edited the first selections from a large number of manuscripts and called the book Poems, 1890; a second compilation came out the following year, called Poems 1891; her letters were published in 1894. Miss Loomis was responsible for a third series of poems in 1896. The fourth book "The Single Hound" was given out in 1914. It contained poems selected by her niece. These were the spontaneous, quick-moving verses that she used to write to her sister Sue, in whom she was accustomed to confide all her joys and sorrows. She loved this girl all her life and believed that Sue was the only person who understood her. Even in her complete retirement she was always in communi-

cation with Sue. A fifth book was published in 1924 under the name of Complete Poems. This book more than any other contained a series of love poems that reflected the influence upon her life of her broken-up love affairs and her disappointments. In 1929 Mrs. Bianchi, a relative, published about two hundred poems under the title of "Further Poems of Emily Dickinson." In "Unpublished Poems" we find many thoughts that can only be considered as the most intimate that any poet ever wrote and possibly this may account for the reason why the poems have been withheld so long.

Her poems began to attract attention sufficient to make them appreciated to any noticeable degree only about forty years ago. Perhaps it was the stories about her which caused the public to show interest and increase the sale of her first poems. She was brought out of oblivion, no doubt, by curiosity. These first poems attracted a great deal of criticism. They were too original and were considered impossible from the convential point of view. No one up to the time she wrote had ever written verse like hers. Mr. Thomas Higginson, her editor, says of her poetry, that he hopes the thoughtful reader

> "will find in these pages a quality more suggestive of the poetry of William Blake than of anything to be elsewhere found - flashes of wholly original and profound insight into Nature and Life; words and phrases exhibiting an extraordinary vividness of description and imaginative power, yet often set in a seemingly whimsical and rugged frame."

By "rugged" he meant that she did not adhere to the principles of rhyming; her verse was stiff because she ignored the rhymes.

Religion played an important part in the life and writings of Emily Dickinson. She was very religious but in spite of her early training she was rebellious at the cramped religion of old Puritan New England. It is evident that she outgrew her childhood religion for she wrote:

But I, grown shrewder, scan the skies.

She could not bow down to the orthodox creed, which was too narrow for her so she broke away from it. She had a living God and saw him about her in the people and the things that she loved. At times we are shocked at the way she mocked Him, but we know that she always recognized His power and felt that she was at His mercy. In one of her poems she decided to run away from God because she says:

I never felt at home below.

Then again under the influence of her earlier teaching she wrote:

But - there's the Judgment Day!

She accused God of duplicity when she said:

We apologize to Thee
For Thine own Duplicity.

In a more pious mood she could write:

Bride of the Father and the Son
Bride of the Holy Ghost

Then again she wrote:

God's residence is next to mine,
His furniture is love.

She did not hesitate to call God a cheat and use her wit on Him. She censured Him for having placed her in this cruel world and wanted to be returned to the atom from which she

was created. She wrote:

> My reason, life I had not had
> But for yourself. 'Twere better charity
> To leave me in the Atom's tomb,
> Merry and nought, and gay and numb,
> Than this smart misery.

The little poem that follows shows that she was in harmony with both the material and spiritual worlds: She said:

> Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
> I keep it staying at home,
> With a bobolink for a chorister,
> And an orchard for a dome.

She found her religion in Nature but God was her preacher. She loved the God of the woods, of the flowers, of her friends. The Sunday God whom the orthodox worshipped was too stern, and too far away from her. We find her criticism on orthodoxy in the following poem:

> The Bible is an antique volume,
> Written by faded men.

Then again she wrote:

> It's easy to invent a life,
> God does it every day -
> Creation but a gambol
> Of His authority.

She accused Him of being unjust in carrying out His plan of creation. She states that His promise of happiness has been withheld. She said:

> It always felt to me a wrong.

She said that she had sought but hadn't found; that she had knocked but it hadn't been opened to her, so she suspected God of being unjust or she wondered perhaps if it was just a blunder of Matthew.

She realized that human beings were not strong

enough in themselves to meet the different problems of life, and that they must look to divine aid. She wrote:

> Not what we did shall be the test
> When acts and will are done
> But what our Lord infers we would -
> Had we diviner been.

She must have studied the Bible considerably for she often used biblical terms. She frequently referred to the Book of Revelations. It was from this book that she got her idea of the heavenly marriage which she gave us in the following poem:

> There came a day at summer's full
> Entirely for me;
> I thought that such were for the saints
> When resurrections be.
>
> The sun, as common, went abroad,
> The flowers, accustomed blew,
> As if no soul that solstice passed
> Which maketh all things new.
>
> The time was scarce profaned by speech;
> The falling of a word
> Was needless, as at sacrament
> The wardrobe of our Lord.
>
> Each was to each the sealed church
> Permitted to commune this time
> Lest we too awkward show
> At supper of "the Lamb."
>
> The hours slid fast, as hours will,
> Clutched tight by greedy hands;
> So faces on two decks look back,
> Bound to opposing lands.
>
> And so when all the time had leaked,
> Without external sound
> Each bound the other's crucifix,
> We gave no other bond.
>
> Sufficient troth that we shall rise,
> Deposed at length the grave -
> To that new marriage, justified
> Through Calvaries of Love!

She has here compared the two lovers to two churches - the

churches with doors and windows tightly sealed. Probably this was the picture of the orthodox church she had retained from childhood. Not a sound could penetrate.

In the following poem we find a simply truth beautifully expressed:

> Opinion is a flitting thing
> But truth outlasts the sun,
> If then we cannot own them both,
> Possess the oldest one.

Also,

> When we have ceased to crave
> The gift is given
> For which we gave the earth
> And mortgaged heaven,
> But so declined in worth -
> 'Tis ignomy now to look upon.

Miss Dickinson has been called

> "an empurpled laureate of Death. She sees it in an accolade of dignity - as general as the air, as the rain and the snow - she faces it with exultation. Beyond death she sees a personal Immortality"

She looked upon death as inevitable and said:

> It's coming - the postponeless creature.

Death meant eternity to her as she infers in the following verse:

> No friend have I that so persists
> As this Eternity.

Her friends say that she was curious about the death of anyone, even of people unknown to her. She would want to know how they died, and if they suffered much. We have a bit of this curiosity in the following verse:

> To know just how he suffered would be dear.
> .....
> Was he afraid or tranquil?

She wrote a poem after the death of a stupid acquaintance that is interesting to note:

> Now I lay thee down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord Thy dust to keep.
> If thou should live before thou wake,
> I pray the Lord Thy soul to make.

She could not imagine that such a lifeless person was ever really alive.

Some of her friends believe that the death of Leonard Humphrey, one of her lovers, is accountable for the melancholy that settled over her and was also the reason for her frequent poems on death. Her family admitted that she was always, even from a child, much preoccupied with death. This death that so much occupied her mind in life has given us her poems and caused her to live through her poems, else we might never have heard of her.

Miss Dickinson was a poet of moods - all sorts of moods - conflicting moods. Her editors have divided her poems into four large groups and tried to arrange them as nearly as they could in chronological order, but with no exactness, and this has made it hard to study her moods. Her moods must be considered from day to day as revealed in her various poems. It is necessary for one to read her poetry as a whole to discover her philosophy. One cannot judge her by any one poem. After reading one set of poems and deciding upon her characteristics, one is sure to change his opinion if he indulges in a wider circle of reading, for other and contradictory elements are sure to enter in.

Her poems were spontaneous and reflected some sudden and fleeting mood. When anything stirred her, she caught the mood of it and waited for the inspiration by which she expressed it. She could express life directly or she could soar away in one of her flights of imaginary beauty. Her poetic flights could originate in some visual impression, some human act, or some mood. Whatever it was, she never tried to explain or reason it out. After presenting her mood or picture she left the interpretation to the reader. Many times she simply suggests her mood. She wrote for self-expression, no doubt, regardless of the character of her mood. The two poems written about the same lover verify this statement. In the first, she says:

> They say that "time assuages" -
> Time never did assuage;
> An actual suffering strengthens
> As sinews do, with age.
>
> Time is a test of trouble,
> But not a remedy.
> If such it prove, it prove too
> There was no malady.

Her second poem says:

> We outgrow love like other things
> And put it in a drawer,
> Till it an antique fashion shows
> Like costumes grandsires wore.

She could not have written the latter verse, following the marriage of her lover, twelve years after she had written the former one, unless time had assuaged and allayed her suffering.

In a sweet reflective mood she had given us the following stanza:

How happy is the little stone
That rambles in the road alone,
And doesn't care about careers,
And exigencies never fears;
Whose coat of elemental brown
A passing universe put on;
And independent as the sun,
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute decree
In casual simplicity.

In a plaintive mood she penned these few elegaic lines:

Let down the bars, O Death!
The tired flocks come in,
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,
Whose wandering is done.

Thine is the stillest night,
Thine the securest fold;
Too near thou art for seeking thee,
Too tender to be told.

She added a touch of beauty to the verse by the slow, calm movement of the lines.

We see a critical trend of mind in two stanzas that follow:

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God.

In a morbid mood she perceived herself as "the supreme iniquity" that had been created by God, for which she strongly condemned him. She apologized to God for his deceit in making her as she was.

In some of her poems she suggests a sense of hurt and despair; in some she is retiring and out of sympathy with things about her; in some she is rebellious, religious or witty; in some she is gracious, gentle or joyous; some reflect

great poetic power. In many of her poems there are instances of sadness and gloom but always there is unlimited faith in her future life. She gave force and beauty to her poetry by allowing her moods and emotions to control her thoughts. She had a strong and unsentimental power of emotion, so she had a powerful and emotional way of presenting her thoughts.

It is almost unbelievable that one who lived in seclusion as she did should resort so much to wit, and stranger still that her wit should be directed so often to God. She wrote hundreds of mocking and witty poems. Here is a bit of wit, lively both in thought and expression:

> I bet every wind that blew, till Nature in chagrin
> Employed a Fact to visit me and scuttle my Balloon!

A little whimsey meant for those who speak for the effect that it has on others:

> I'm Nobody! Who are you?
> Are you nobody, too?
> Then there's a pair of us - don't tell!
> They'd banish us, you know.
>
> How dreary to be somebody!
> How public, like a frog
> To tell your name the livelong day
> To an admiring bog!

An exquisite whimsey, which is somewhat out of her usual mood, expresses the intoxicating effect that beauty has upon her:

> I taste a liquor never brewed,
> From tankards scooped in pearl;
> Not all the vats upon the Rhine
> Yield such an alcohol!
>
> Inebriate of air am I,
> And debauchee of dew,
> Reeling, through endless summer days,
> From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee
Out of the foxglove's door,
When butterflies renounce their drams,
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,
And saints to windows run,
To see the little tipler
Leaning against the sun!

After the death of Emily Bronte, she wrote:

Oh what an afternoon for heaven
When Bronte entered there!

In the poem about the butterfly, her wit takes on a satirical turn:

The butterfly obtains
But little sympathy,
Though favorably mentioned
In Entomology.
Because he travels freely
And wears a proper coat,
The circumspect are certain
That he is dissolute.
Had he the homely scutcheons of modest Industry,
'Twere fitter certifying for Immortality.

In a happy mood, she was glad that she was alive and wrote:

I'm sorry for the dead today
.....

also she wrote:

To be alive is power,
.....
Omnipotence enough.

One of her love poems says:

Your riches taught me poverty
.....
It's far, far treasure to surmise,
And estimate the pearl
That slipped my simple fingers through
While just a girl at school.

But she could express her suspicion as well:

Is bliss, then, such abyss
I must not put my foot amiss
In fear I spoil my shoe?

With a feeling of loss and longing she wrote:

Except that heaven had come so near,
So seemed to choose my door,
The distance would not haunt me so;
I had not hoped before.

But just to hear the grace depart
I never thought to see,
Afflicts me with a double loss;
'Tis lost, and lost to me.

In a spirit of renunciation, she wrote:

A soul admitted to Itself
Finite Infinity.

Her contradictions suggest a duality in her thinking, such as Emerson referred to when he said:

"All things are double, one against another."

Miss Dickinson lived in an atmosphere of intuition as well as in a world of reality. In her intuitive and imaginary mood she wrote:

Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye .....

Also, from the invisible we have the little poem:

A little road not made of man
.....
I only sigh - no vehicle
Bears me along that way.

There was a duality manifest both in her life and in her mind, and she was always trying to work out this problem as we see from her poetry. She was rebellious and she was meek; if reverent, she was often mocking; although serious and solemn, she was witty; although intense, she could control it; if she thought well of herself and kept the titled visitor kneeling outside her gate, she was also too fond of her lovers; if drunken with some inspiration, she could manage it. So we see her flitting from opposite to

opposite, first by being one thing and then being another, or expressing one mood and then contradicting it.

She admired Emerson. She did not believe in the evil which he denied. We do not get the impression from her writings that she wanted a new theology as he did, although she felt the misfortune and guilt of being a sinner. She applied her own experiences to scriptural tests and drew her own conclusions from the results of those tests.

Miss Dickinson has been compared with Hawthorne. Both dramatize the soul and are special representatives of the hineteenth-century Puritanism. Hawthorne believed that man was measured by a great idea outside himself and was found wanting. This idea contrasted with that held by Emerson, who thought that man was greater than any idea and he himself being the Over-Soul was perfect. Miss Dickinson's intellect differed from Hawthorne's. He recognized the abstract and was keen at reasoning out his problems in an ethical way and his reasoning was most convincing. Miss Dickinson was purely a visionist and she pictured her visions in a very individual way and never attempted to reason anything out. He was a historian and dealt chiefly with facts; she was a lyric poet and lived in her imagination.

After the passing of Emerson New England literature seemed to have lost its life and intensity and Miss Dickinson filled in the gap between these two great influences.

She has been contrasted with Thoreau, who neither loved nor renounced the world as she did. Nature was his only

friend, while she had personal friends also. He was never in love and did not suffer from its disappointments as she did. She seems to have been influenced in no way by him.

There is no doubt that she was influenced to a certain extent by Emily Bronte. She first read Miss Bronte's poetry after the death of Leonard Humphrey, after which she herself began to write more and more in a sad and serious strain. Miss Bronte's poems were concerned chiefly with the soul, with death, and with God, the same as were Miss Dickinson's. These two women were very much alike in their habits. They both sought seclusion and were in no way interested in the lives of people who lived in their own towns. Neither seemed to have felt alone in her solitude, and both recognized the beauty and significance of Nature. Their acquaintance with human nature was limited but the scope of their imagination was broad and there was where they lived chiefly. Whatever we know of their lives we have to infer from their writings.

In her original and deep insight into life and nature she resembles William Blake, although she probably never heard of him. By means of her words and phrases she described with extraordinary vividness as he did and both show a remarkable imaginative power working in their minds. Her mysticism shows a similarity to that of Blake's.

She dwelt in a lovely and happy world of imagination and clothed the most common things of life in magical and mystical form. With the knowledge of a mystic she gives expression to her unclouded thought in the poem:

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

She wrote imagistically. Her work shows clarity of image, condensed form and freedom from metrical lines - all of which belong to Imagism. The topic for a great many of her poems is most unusual and she never indulges in description for its own sake. Many subjects she wrote about were unheard of in her time and poets and readers detested them. We can actually visualize her images, so clearly-drawn are they, and the various component parts to the vision are so closely united that we see them making one complete picture.

Wonderfully beautiful are the pictures that she drew of the sunsets which she could see from her window and from her garden. So beautiful and real are these that we frame them in our minds and hold as so many unforgettable scenes that we have witnessed. We have one vivid sketch of the sun's sinking into the west as given in the following stanza:

Night after night her purple traffic
Strews the landing with open bales;
Merchantmen pause upon horizons
Dip and vanish with fairy sails.

And here is another vivid sunset scene as pictured in the poem:

She sweeps with many-colored brooms,
And leaves the shreds behind;
Oh, housewife in the evening west,
Come back, and dust the pond!

You dropped a purple ravelling in,
You dropped an ambre thread;

And now you've littered all the East
With duds of emerald!

And still she plies her spotted brooms,
And still the aprons fly,
Till brooms fade softly into stars -
And then I come away.

There is imagism in the following poem:

A little madness in the Spring
Is wholesome even for the King
But God be with the Clown,
Who ponders with tremendous scene -
This whole experiment of green,
As if it were his own!

The whole experiment of green presents the picture of Nature all decked out in her green leaves. She was a forerunner of the imagist in another way. She was the first to describe a thing by its appearance only without regard to its entity in any other way. The poem on the humming-bird is a good example:

A route of evanescence
With a revolving wheel;
A resonance of emerald;
A rush of cochineal;
And every blossom on the bush
Adjusts its tumbled head -
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy morning's ride.

This poem expresses the lively ,light-hearted spirit and we note that she would not sacrifice her word for the sake of making a rhyme.

She expresses fear in a number of her poems. She has given us a queer symbolic poem that pictures the worm that grew within her room, to be a snake, from which she fled:

"This was a dream," she ends.

She also expresses fear in the poem quoted below:

I stepped from plank to plank
So slow and cautiously;
The stars about my head I felt,
About my feet the sea.

I knew not but the next
Would be my final inch -
This gave me that precarious gait
Some call experience.

She sensed the "lure of forbidden fruit" and fled from it. The little poem she wrote about Etna gives her impression of fear. Those who knew her say that she did not fear the violent outbursts as much as the "quiet purr." She wrote:

When Etna basks and purrs,
Naples is more afraid
Than when she shows her garnet tooth;
Security is loud.

It is said that she always sensed dangers about her in the quiet. The poem quoted has been likened to "The Ancient Mariner" in its fantastic quality and use of color. Both Coleridge and Miss Dickinson make fine use of their great imaginative powers.

Loneliness, disappointment and misunderstanding all moved beneath the surface of her writings. She found herself out of tune with her surroundings and tried to adjust herself in a new life-scheme built up by herself. Her daring speech and her eccentricities of mind and of actions were shocking, but they were never affected for they sprang from the soul. She was dissatisfied with the way that poetry was written and she found a way all her own of clothing her thoughts. Her impossible, too original, unconventional poems brought rebuke. She was not artificial enough to use the old worn-out words ending in -eth, -est, thee, thy and the like. She had definite thought to express and although it

might be confusing to others, she had a clear vision of it and put it into rhythmical but not metrical verse. It was not natural for her to express her thoughts in rhyme, although probably all the poetry she had ever read was metrical and rhymed. She preferred to use cadence and her cadence is a hidden rhythmical music that touches the heart strings. In this she was the forerunner of the poets of the twentieth century. Her artistic finish was her assonace and alliteration, both of which are common to her verse. She was artist enough to know that her sublime thought would not fit into the conventional form of verse used in her time.

Her poems were lyrics chiefly. She tried to objectify everything that came into her life and into her mind. Her lyrics are very appealing though often hard to understand because of their condensed style. Readers like them because she makes such abstractions as love, loneliness, hope, death and immortality seem near and intimate. She takes away the sting and fear. Some readers do not get into the spirit of her poetry and claim that it is not musical and lacks interest; some think it is crude, imperfect and not inspired and they put down the book dissatisfied.

One can hardly imagine a poem that can surpass or perhaps equal the one she wrote for unrelieved expression of emotion:

> Pain has an element of blank;
> It cannot recollect
> When it began, or if it were
> A day when it was not.

It has no future but itself,
Its infinite realms contain
Its past, enlightened to perceive
New periods of pain.

Back of all her visions she saw God but she was not strong enough to work out from under the pain of her suffering.

The qualities of her verse that show her individuality most strikingly are her spontaneity, her intense feeling, her expression condensed to the extreme, her inexplainable contradictions and her witty allusions toward the Deity, often becoming irreverent. The strength of her images is something at which to marvel. Hers is a poetry of flashes expressing wholly original and individual ideas. Her verses are chaotic. Her pathos and humor bring sudden starts and exciting imagery. In describing her verse some one has referred to it as "not so much verses as clots of fire, shreds of heaven, snatches of eternity."

Emily Dickinson's poetry has been for many people as great a puzzle as her life. If she has not been understood, it might be partially due to the fact that readers have not changed with the times - not the times in which she wrote but with modern times. She wrote the modern way long before it became the style among others. Her work, born in obscurity, is steadily making its way into the hearts of those who can interpret it, because of its beauty.

Howell's, our great American poet says:

> "If nothing else had come out of our life but this strange poetry, we should feel that in the work of Emily Dickinson, America, or New England rather, had made a distinctive addition

to the literature of the world, and could
not be left out of any record of it."

"She leaves a stab of memory, not of pain, but
as of a flower, with all its color chaliced,
straight upon its stem."

E L I N O R W Y L I E

The work of no poet has achieved fame in such a short time as that of Elinor Wylie. Her growth has been like a series of steps taken in rapid strides, each one carrying her a little higher than the preceding one. She seems to have emerged from a background of no preparation into a vast field of poetry, as a full-fledged poet.

She produced, in an unbelievably short time, four volumes of poetry and four of prose, and these books have placed her among the most accomplished of American poets. These books were all written within a period of eight years; none before her thirty-fourth year and none after her forty-second, which was the year of her death.

She was born Elinor Hoyt. She came from a brilliant American family of English origin and was reared with every social advantage, making her debut in Washington society at the age of twenty. In 1907, when twenty-one, she was married to Phil Hichborn, son of Rear Admiral Hichborn of the United States Navy. This marriage was broken up because of her elopement with Horace Wylie, to whom she was later married after her second elopement with him. At the time of her death she was the wife of William Rose Benet, the poet.

As a girl she loved literature and wrote some poetry when she was eight years of age. Much of her background

of classical reading she got in her childhood while living with her parents at Washington. From fourteen to twenty-two she wrote poetry but not really in earnest and then stopped writing for seven years while she was having her escapades, and going through the aftermath that made her want to withdraw from public view.

She went to England to live but to the surprise of those who knew her, she soon returned and the following poem appeared:

> Now why should I, who walk alone,
> Who am ironical and proud,
> Turn when a woman casts a stone,
> At a begger in a shroud?

She could not adjust herself to her home in England and she did not desire to return to Washington. She was unhappy, alone and unoccupied, so she decided to go to Maine. There she lived alone with her typewriter in a small room over a grocery store, in 1919, and wrote verse that resounded with a sad and mournful note. She had given up a life of luxury and excitement to live in this way and it has been questioned whether

> "It was life's enrichments or life's deprivation that tempted her to write."

Here in Maine she was inspired by the woods and by the sea but she was dissatisfied - restless - and after a short time she went to New York where she settled down to writing in all earnestness, in her thirty-fourth year. She was probably inspired by her last husband, Mr. Benet, the writer, to write with the powerful determination that produced great results. So we find her at the age of thirty-four just discovering the

literary gift that was hers, after she had been through the most tragic experience, which probably was the thing necessary to call it forth.

Her first published poems appeared in The Century Magazine, in Poetry and in The New Republic. There were some poems she classed as "Incidental Numbers" written in 1921, which was a small collection and they were never reissued because she considered them the work of a juvenile. In 1921, also, appeared the first book of poems that she was proud to claim the authorship of, "Nets to Catch the Wind". This book made her reputation as a poet of great prominence. It won for her the Julia Ellsworth Ford prize that was awarded by the Poetry Society of America for the best book of poems published in the United States in the year 1921. "Black Armour" followed close on the heels of "Nets to Catch the Wind" and this book tended not only to hold her reputation but to increase it. In this second book her expression is more intellectual and her feeling is more profound. She was more interested in the thought that she had to express than how she should express that thought.

In 1929 her third book of poems came out - "Trivial Breath". It is written in the same intellectual strain but her thought is expressed in a more subdued tone and is more variable than in her two preceding books. The contents of her three books to date are just one hundred poems and most of them are quite short. Possibly two or three consist of as many as fifty lines and her longest poem has about two hundred.

Her fourth and last book of poems has been published under the title of "Angels and Earthly Creatures." It is so-named after the finest poem in the book. It is her heart and not her intellect that speaks out through the poems of this collection and they reflect her deeper understanding of herself and of life in general.

When we give careful attention to her four books of poems we invariably conclude that her growth was as sudden as it was remarkable. In the chronological arrangement they show a series of marked advancement.

The preceding outline of her writings has not included her first four poems, which she called her "First Acceptor." These were printed in 1820 before her first book "Nets to Catch the Wind" and even these poems are considered as capable of forecasting her as a master of arts. As she wrote from time to time her poetry gained not only in depth but in simplicity. The outstanding characteristic of all her poetry is clarity and this is noticeable especially in her later poems. Her clarity was the outcome of her carefully striving to attain that end. Although her work was cleverly done, it never seems labored. Peregrine is a good example of this:

..... loved a city
And a street's alarums;
Parks were pretty
And so were bar-rooms
He loved fiddles
He talked with rustics;
Life was riddles
And queer acostics.

The noose draws tighter;
This is the end;
I'm a good fighter,
But a bad friend:

I've played the traitor
Over and over;
I'm a good hater
But a bad lover.

As a more careful study of her books is made, it may be noted that "Nets to Catch he Wind" does not show the working of a grave and melancholy mind altogether. There are instances of playfulness and strains of emotion run along through a large number of her poems. She conceived the idea that our senses are nets which are not strong enough to stop and control the emotions that are all about us and as a consequence of this fact we learn but little from our experiences. We have this idea expressed in the poem "The Eagle and the Mole" :

Avoid the reeking herd,
Shun the polluted flock,
Live like a stoic bird,
The eagle of the rock.

.....

When flocks are folded warm,
And herds to shelter run,
He sails above the storm,
He stares into the sun.

If you would keep your soul,
From spotted sight or sound,
Live like the velvet mole
Go burrow under ground.

.....
And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stone.

Not only in the poem just quoted but in many other beautiful poems we note her desire to soar with the eagle into the sun, to shrink to fairy size and to make her escape from the crowd. This would be a healing balm to her weary soul.

In "Black Armour" there is a more brilliant brain and a more submissive soul at work in many of her poems. In the poem "Epitaph" she expresses this thought:

> In coldest crucibles of pain
> Her shrinking flesh was fired
> And smoothed into a finer grain
> To make it more desired.

In the poem entitled "Song" she says:

> When I am dead, or sleeping
> Without pain,
> My soul will stop creeping
> Through my jewelled brain.
>
> With no brightness to dye it
> None will see where
> It flows clear and quiet
> As a river of air;

Her thoughts tortured her emotions and in turn they made their impression upon her writing. She might have thought that her only idea of mental peace was to be found in the spiritual life but she loved her material life as many of her poems reveal, even with its pains, its troubles and its inharmonies. In "Let No Charitable Hope", the oft-quoted stanza, she shows her hatred of the crowd most effectively:

> I was, being human, born alone;
> I am, being woman, hard beset;
> I live by squeezing from a stone
> The little nourishment I get.

The last stanza of this poem gives us to understand that she had accepted the conditions in life as they came to her and made the best of them:

> In masks outrageous and austere
> The years go by in single file;
> But none has merited my fear,
> And none has quite escaped my smile.

In the poem "This Hand" she calls her hand:

> Blue-veined and yellowish,

Ambiguous to clasp
And secret as a fish,
And sudden as an asp:

and then if she had lived under different conditions, she could expect from this hand:

Elixirs might escape;
But now compact as stone,
My hand preserves a shape
Too utterly its own.

She expresses her love of this life even in her sufferings and we see her enjoying its beauty, even when tasting the ivory pulp of the pomgranate of Proserpine with the seven seeds of death held in her mouth. The poem appears in "Trivial Breath" :

Now that the shutter of the dusk
Begins to tremble in its groove,
I am constrained to strip the husk
From everything I truly love.

So short a time remains to taste
The ivory pulp, the seven pips,
My heart is happy without haste
With revelation at its lips.

So calm a beauty shapes the core,
So grave a blossom frames the stem,
In this last minute and no more
My eyes alone shall eat of them.

In criticising "Black Armour" Mr. Max Leith says:

> "Her mind is as curiously masculine as the method of her verse is feminine .....The things she desires are the lovely things of a courageous mind, ...freedom from common men and things. Cruelty which can burn away soft and too mortal flesh, savagery, sharp edges and keen points of pain have a beauty which she understands - they are the weapons of the mind to lay bare the skeleton of things."

She was a brave soul and a good fighter. Her fighting quality is shown in a number of poems in this book.

The Dedication to Trivial Breath is a beautiful poem and a valuable asset to the English language. It has real poetic fire. There are two poems in this book that will appeal to the poetic feeling in the reader if he possesses such a feeling - "Desolation is a Delicate Thing" and "Confession of Faith". In the former poem the cadences are slow and the lines of variable length:

> Sorrow lay upon my breast more heavily than
> winter clay
> Lying ponderable upon the unmoving bosom
> of the dead;
> Yet it was dissolved like a thin snowfall;
> it was softly withered away;
> Presently like a single drop of dew it
> had trembled and fled.

In reviewing Trivial Breath, Jessica North said of this poem that it showed

> "hitherto undemonstrated reaches of the author's genius."

Preciseness is an outstanding quality of her poems but her excellent expression and phrasing do not show that her preciseness interferes with them in any way.

In the Coast Guard's Cottage we note an expression of love, tenderness and pity;

> You must not weep, my dear; 'tis bitter harm
> They've done you, but the coverlid is warm,
> And pity, softer than a feather bed,
> Is comfortably spread
> To soothe your body which the sea has broken;
> Come, 'tis the truth I've spoken.
> In this small cottage all the crying latches
> Have told of you, and seawater in patches.

The lovely poem "As I Went Down by Havre de Grace ...." begins with the beautiful stanza:

As I went down by Havre de Grace
I saw the laurel in the wood;
The hours (I said) are sands that pass
And some are bad and some are good:
Some are black and some are bright
Yet all were darker, I suppose
In lands where laurel is waxen white
And never white suffused with rose.

In the following stanza we have a picture of pity and despair:

As I went out by Prettymarsh
I saw the Mayflower under the leaves:
Life (I said) is rough and harsh
And fretted by a hundred griefs:
Yet were it more than I could face,
Who have faced out a hundred dooms,
Had I been born in any place
Where this small flower never blooms.

Some critics claim that this book contains her most artificial group of poems - poems that are excellently formed but devoid of meaning - "empty verse."

"Angels and Earthly Creatures", her posthumous book, which she arranged in final form on the night before her death, is a sequence of love sonnets that have made of Mrs. Wylie, heretofore an artist of words chiefly, an artist of finished poetic expression. The book consists of four parts: a sonnet sequence composed of nineteen sonnets, a section entitled "Elements and Angels", one named "Earthly Creatures", and the last called "Elegies and Epistles". No doubt, some readers will not get below the artificial manner in which she has presented her thought in this book and will lose the intensity and depth of feeling but their hearts and minds will surely be stirred by the wonderfully fine expression, now and then. The spirit that speaks to us in this book is meek and lowly, and expresses its own conviction.

This book surpasses all others in deep thought and emotion. There are many poems in it that must be read over and over before we get the meaning of the author. The feeling here that she has clothed in a most intellectual way, we know must have been profound and have caused her great suffering.

The old belief in the protection of the Guardian Angel which conforms to some of the religious teachings influenced her to write the following poem:

> A subtle spirit has my path attended,
> In likeness not a lion but a pard;
> And when the arrows flew like hail, and hard,
> He licked my wounds and all my wounds
> were mended;
> And happy I, who walked so well-defended,
> With that translucid presence for a guard,
> Under a sky reversed and evil-starred;
> A woman by an archangel befriended.

She had outlived the sharp blows of fate when she expressed this belief. This verse required deep thought and study and she has so interwoven the thought with her own personal feeling that the two are inseparable.

In the preface to the Sonnet Sequence she wrote:

> "These words are true although at intervals
> The unfaithful clay contrives to make them
> false."

In the very start she admits that she has not lived up to her own conviction. She would have us disregard the appearance and read with the understanding of her highest intentions being carried out. We are to realize that her failures are due to the fate that has made her an earthly creature and not an angel.

In the sonnet that follows she reveals the heart and mind of a proud spiritual woman who realizes that she is also material:

I have believed that I prefer to live
Preoccupied by a Platonic mind;
I have believed me obdurate and blind
To those sharp ecstacies the pulses give;
The clever body five times sensitive
I never have discovered to be kind
As the poor soul, deceived and half-divined,
Whose hopes are water in a witch's sieve.
O, now both soul and body are unfit
To apprehend this miracle, my Lord!
Not all my senses striving in accord
With my pure essence, are aware of it
Save as a power remote and exquisite,
Not seen or known, but fervently adored.

It is a wonder that the author could have expressed a thought so alive as this in such an old traditional form as a sonnet. It is a most unusual, free and rare use of lyrical verse. It reminds us of the biblical allusion that refers to the putting of new wine into old bottles. All of her sonnets are very unusual and those written toward the close of her life surpass those written earlier.

"One Person" has been criticised as a philosophic theme tangled up in a lot of literary rhetoric and as usual when she has attempted philosophic themes, she has indulged in a lot of rhetorical forcing that does not convince the reader of the proof of what she is trying to communicate. However much they are criticised, it must be admitted that her sonnets stand out in contrast with those written by her contemporaries, whose verse sounds more mechanical and according rote. The easy line and the wonderful vocabulary give her sonnets a prominent ranking in the field of poetry.

One of her sonnets which has been named "Angels and Earthly Creatures" is a piece of beauty and loveliness:

The little beauty that I was allowed -
The lips new-cut and coloured by my sire,
The polished hair, the eyes' perceptive fire -
Has never been enough to make me proud:
For I have moved companioned by a cloud,
And lived indifferent to the blood's desire
Of temporal loveliness in vain attire;
My flesh was but a fresh-embroidered shroud.

Now do I grow indignant at the fate
Which made me so imperfect to compare
With your degree of noble and of fair;
Our elements are the farthest skies apart;
And I enjoin you, ere it is too late,
To stamp your superscription on my heart.

Between the lines we can see her plea for sympathy and understanding for her weaknesses. She has had her vision clouded and has not been strong enough to emerge and stand in the light. She seems to ask forgiveness for what she has done to injure. It was not an intentional act. The underlying idea is that if we were not angels and earthly creatures all in one we would be more thoughtful of those we love and would try to make them happy.

The theme of this poem she got from John Donne, the great metaphysical poet. It was his idea that

> "Because Angels could not propagate, nor make more Angels, He enlarged His love, in making man, that so he might enjoy all nature at once and have the nature of Angels and the nature of earthly Creatures in one Person."

There are three poems in the book that stand out conspicuously above the reat - "This Corruptible" ,"Hymn to Earth", and "O Virtuous Light." Critics agree that she has not chosen the right metrical scheme for "This Corruptible" but that "Hymn to Earth" is about as near perfect as any poem she has ever written. By all critics it is pronounced "a noble valedictory." This poem, perhaps more than

any other that she has written, has been instrumental in bringing her unbounded fame. Here are some of the lines in the last two stanzas:

> Hail element of earth, receive thy own,
> And cherish, at thy charitable breast,
> This man, this mongrel beast;
> He plows the sand, and, at his hardest need,
> He sows himself for seed:
>
> .....
>
> Receive him as thy lover for an hour
> Who will not weary by a longer stay,
> The kind embrace of clay;
> Even within thine arms he is dispersed
> To nothing, as at first;
> .....

Here we have profound thought expressed in a most dignified way. The theme is death. She does not place herself visibly into the death theme but she conveys her own feelings in the images that she creates purposely to reflect the personal in them. Her feelings are beautifully clothed in language that forcibly communicates them to the minds of the readers, but they are never overdrawn.

The poem "O Virtuous Light" is another poem that must be read a second time and possibly a number of times to understand it. It is hard to get the meaning although her diction is clear and her expression direct. Clear diction and direct expression were the two main characteristics of her writings. In this poem she expresses a truth that she has long meditated upon - a truth that she has logically worked out from her own conflicts. She expresses the truth as follows:

> Mysterious as steel and flint
> The birth of this destructive spark,
> Whose inward growth has power to print
> Strange suns upon the natural dark.

O break the walls of sense in half
And make this spirit fugitive!
This light begotten of itself
Is not a light by which to live!

O virtuous light, if thou be man's
Or matter of the meteor stone,
Prevail against this radiance
Which is engendered of its own!

She realized that one could place too high a value on thought, which was the light begotten of itself and not the light by which to live. She thought that intellect could become dangerous and intellectualism, of itself, could become a vice. She tried to overcome this undesirable thing by intense emotion and deep thought.

In Birthday Sonnet, she unburdens her heart and places herself in divine care:

Take home thy prodigal child, O Lord of Hosts!
Protect the sacred from the secular danger;
Advise her that Thou never needst avenge her;
Marry her mind neither to man's nor ghost's
.....
Angels may wed her to their ultimate hurt
And men embrace a spectre in a shift
So that no drop of the pure spirit fall
Into the dust: defend Thy prodigal.

Love is the theme for a number of her sonnets in this book. In one of her poems she tells her lover to

Remember only the intrepid song;
The flag defended and the gauntlet flung;
The love that speech can never render plain;
The mind's resolve to turn and strive again
The fortitude that has endured so long.

She recognized the weakness of love but it was pure and not tainted with the lower element, although it was personal. She believed that after its failure it was capable of obtaining happiness. She was very desirous of possessing love, but in her mind she reasoned out that it was an illusion. We note

in her poems that her loves, friendships, joys, pains and sufferings are all rather implied and never expressed. She suggests them and leaves them to the interpretation of the reader but never sentimentalizes upon them. She wanted beauty, too. She was fond of it in herself as well as in others. It was beauty in itself she loved, pure and lovely - beauty removed from the senses. She treated it more or less intellectually and emotionally in her first poems but in her later ones she was a firm believer in it in a more sincere manner.

Mrs. Wylie was able to unite the visual with the tangible and how beautifully and yet how simply she has done this in her early sonnet "August" :

> Why should this negro insolently stride
> Down the red noonday on such noiseless feet?
> Piled in his barrow, tawnier than wheat,
> Lie heaps of daisies, sombre-eyed,
> Their copper petals shrivelled up with pride,
> Hot with a superfluity of heat
> .....
> Are there no water lilies smooth as cream,
> With long stems dripping crystal? Are there none
> Like those white lilies, luminous and cool,
> Plucked from some hemlock-darkened northern stream?

In this poem the heat effect is brought out in the tropical negro, in the red noonday sun, in the daisies smouldering with the heat and in other expressions in parts not quoted. The water-lilies with their stems dripping crystal and the northern stream shaded by hemlocks give us the balancing contrast of coolness.

There is an unhappy overtone running through much of her poetry and this is undoubtedly traceable to the unfortunate conditions of her life. It is claimed that she left Washington to avoid criticism and disagreeable gossip and lived

more or less in seclusion in New York. We see a hint of this in the long sonnet which we has named "Wild Peaches" :

> Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones
> There's something in this richness that I hate.
> I love the look, austere, immaculate,
> Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones.
> There's something in my very blood that owns
> Bare hills, cold silver on a sky of slate,
> A thread of water, churned to milky spate
> Streaming through slanting pastures fenced with stones
>
> .....
>
> Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,
> And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.

What a forcible ending for a very impressive poem! In "Wild Peaches", "Velvet Shoes", "True Vine", "Havre de Grace","Hymn to Earth" and "One Person" we see the Puritan instinct for simple experiences. This theme is enlarged upon in many of her poems. She deserves much praise for the way she has handled this fundamental view of things, although she did not live up to the sentiment expressed in these poems.

In "Innocent Landscape" we have a poem with a bitter reproach or evil prediction on the deception of faith and feeling that is pleasing in appearance but superficial and accursed. The last stanza follows:

> Here is no virtue; here is nothing blessed
> Save this foredoomed suspension of the end;
> Faith is the blossom, but the fruit is cursed;
> Go hence, for it is useless to pretend.

Her poem "Minotaur" is an example of pastiche. In this poem she admitted that the verbal exercises tired her. Her imitative phrases become fanciful and meaningless: It begins with the stanza:

> Go study to disdain
> The frail, the over-fine
> Which tapers to a line
> Knotted about the brain.

The poem "Absent Thee From Felicity Awhile" is another beautiful poem belonging to Elements and Angels and is the product of a mind illumined with higher thought and wisdom.

Earthly Creatures and Elegies and Epistles both have some inferior poems but the section Elements and Angels contains not only the best poems she has written but poems that will remain permanently fixed in our language. This book is the one that shows her greatness as a poet. Here she gave her attention to highly polished forms and to subtle statements, and her style marks the beginning of the Classical reaction. The technique that she has been all her poetic life building up now becomes the means of expressing her deep emotion. Her poems are artistic as well as precise.

She was fond of contrasts as illustrated in her poem, "Nonsense Rhyme" :

The worst and best are both inclined
To snap like vixens at the truth;
But, O, beware the middle mind
That purrs and never shows a tooth!

A pinch of fair, a pinch of foul.
And bad and good make best of all;
Beware the moderated soul
That climbs no fractional inch to fall.

She had no use for the "middle-minds", the "moderated souls", "Ambiguous smiles", and the "nothing-muches."

In many of her poems she expressed the desire to escape from all her troubles. In "Velvet Shoes" she censures the world and wants to go in hiding. The same idea reechoes through the poem "Escape" :

.....
I shall stop fighting and escape
Into a little house I'll build.

But first I'll shrink to fairy size,
With a whisper no one understands,
Making blind moons of all your eyes,
And muddy roads of all your hands.

And you may grope for me in vain
In hollows under the mangrove root,
Or where in apple-scented rain,
The silver wasp-nests hang like fruit.

She was fond of drawing pictures of herself. In a large number of poems she was the subject but she always treated herself impersonally. She used a great deal of skill in the way she translated her feelings into images. In the sonnet "Self-Portrait" she shows that she is conscious of that crystaline element in her nature, that she was accused of having. Critics claimed that she crystalized her emotions. Perhaps she did on the surface but she did not destroy her emotions. She reacted toward life emotionally and her emotion was deep. In "Self-Portrait" she refers to this idea:

A lens of crystal whose transparence calms
Queer stars to clarity,and disentangles
Fox-fires to form austere refracted angles:
A texture polished on the horny palms
Of vast equivocal creatures, beast or human:
Graved with the Graces in intaglio
To set sarcastic sigil on the woman.

This for the mind, for the the little rest
A hollow scooped to blackness in her breast,
The simulacrum of a cloud, a feather:
Instead of stone, instead of sculptured strength,
This soul, this vanity, blown hither and thither
By trivial breath, over the whole world's length.

This "hollow" in her breast shows her bitterness. The last two lines give the appearance of frustration - the soul flitting about hither and thither, trying to free itself through pride.

Perhaps there was no other criticism made against her

so much as that of coldness. Her critics might have been looking for sentimentalism, which we do not find anywhere in her poetry. Her best poems seem to try to hide the emotion that has taken hold of her mind and has left a distrubing element. Perhaps, also, it was her preciseness that led to accusation of coldness. Whatever it was, we, at any rate know that a pure emotion formed the undertone to all her poetry but she never appealed to the reader for self-pity. In "Nets to Catch the Wind" she said:

> From the world's hand which tries
> To tear you apart
> You have stolen the falcon's eyes
> And the lion's heart.

The following stanza also shows her awareness of the criticism of coldness and lack of emotion:

> I have been accused
> Of gold and silver trickery, infused
> With blood of meteors and moonstones, which
> Are cold as eyeballs in a flooded ditch.

When reviewers of her books began to comment on her work, they attached the words "brittle", "cold", "glassy", "jewelled" to her, and these epithets have clung to her, more or less, even to this day. They can in no way apply to her last book. In Angels and Earthly Creatures we still observe her excellence of thought, her precision of form and intellectual beauty, which have always been characterictic of her writings, but she has added to these love and pure emotion and tenderness. Although she had a liking for conventional verse, she did not consider it a proper medium to convey what she had to say. It handicapped the pure expression of her thought so she adopted her own.

All during her life Mrs. Wylie was a worshipper of Shelley. His influence upon her in her earlier life is considered about the most important thing that ever happened to her. She spent a great deal of time studying his works. In her Hymn to Earth we can see that her understanding of and her love for Shelley formed in her a reflection of Shelley's own spirit. She agreed with Shelley that Love and Beauty were inseparable and she expressed her emotion in simple musical language without embellishments. She believed that there were love and beauty in the world to be enjoyed and the trouble and suffering to be accepted courageously. The keynote throughout all these poems is that life is beautiful to the highest degree and the subtle beauty of Shelley shows up in them, but her form is entirely different.

Mrs. Wylie has been contrasted with Edna Millay, who was more attentive to expressing her passionate emotion as directly as possible. Mrs. Wylie was more intent on making her well-formed verse and polishing it. Although her personality was expressed through her technique, it is not evident that she built up the technique for the main purpose of projecting her personality through it. Miss Millay's poetry from the start showed a strong projection of personality and this characteristic is seen throughout all her poetry even to the end, except that as she became a more experienced writer she was able to improve upon and increase the imagery through which she expressed her feelings, Love and death were the favorite themes of both these writers.

In the following lines, Mrs. Wylie has given us a very good description of a northern season,and by this we can see that she was able to write clearly that which she observed, though she rarely gives us descriptions:

> That Spring, briefer than apple blossom's breath,
> Summer so much too beautiful to stay,
> Swift Autumn, like a bonfire of leaves
> And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death!

About the only poem where she is known to express her own feelings directly is "Atavism",which belongs to her "Nets to Catch the Wind." This poem with its slow sweeping rhythms, however, does not give us definite, clear-cut facts, but only a kind of hazy picture of a person that defends her from what she fears:

> I always was afraid of Somes's Pond:
> Not the little pond .....
> .....
> .....but the one beyond.
> .....
>
> Some strange thing tracks us, turning where we turn.
>
> .....
>
> Look! Where the lily stems are showing red
> A silent paddle moves below the water,
> A sliding shape has stirred them like a breath;
> Tall plumes surmount a painted mask of death.

This "Poet of high desires and deep despairs", as H. Monroe refers to her, had an individual and unique manner of writing. Much of what she says is true poetry and no prose translation can justly bring out its meaning, for it is the cry of the heart that echoes through and through it. No poetic statement of truth can be equalled in any other form of expression. In trying to translate it, we

partly lose the strength of the personal expression, and partly misinterpret, or fail entirely to get the right meaning. Many times we can feel with her but we cannot express our feelings. When we dwell upon the artificial manner by which she protected her emotions, we lose the depth as well as the intensity of the thought that she has tried to convey in her own way. If we disregard the artificiality of her poems, our minds and our hearts will be both equally and deeply seized.

However much we might have been out of patience with her for her shortcomings in life, her verse creates in us a respect for her, although her "words are false", but these words were not an expression of defiance and not of despair.

There is no doubt that she was one of the finest poets of our times. Mr. Benet says that

> "She was the finest and truest contemporary poet of her sex writing in the English language, and though she died at forty-two, she had perfected her style and delivered her message."

As she went along in her poetic experience we note that the sharp edge was carved off her poems, the gait was slackened, the music took a softer note, and the lines lost their tightness.

As we refer back to HYMN TO EARTH, her great lyric treating the theme of death profoundly and sublimely, we do not find there the voice of a minor poet. It is a poem that will be long-lived, as several of her other poems will be.

Her best poems are those where the feminine quality is lacking for in them we see her more than a woman. We recognize her as trained by her art, by her mind, and by her spirit, a compelling force in American Literature. Her delicate thought generally tends to give a feminine quality to her verse, although this delicate thought may refer neither to a weak nor vague statement. There are many poems in her last book in which we hear the cry of a woman. Sometimes the voice is tender and pleading; sometimes it is satirical or bitter. But there are many poems where the idea of sex is absent, and we are aware only of the thought and feeling expressed.

Some of her poems will never die, for they have helped to change over our American poetry to a freer and more democratic basis, one not stilted and aestheticized. Mrs. Wylie deserves praise for the success with which she was able to bring such wonderful innovations into traditional forms, and for the fine judgment she has shown in using dissonance and suspended rhyme in her verse, also for her skill in phonetics, and the use of assonance, which occurs commonly in her poetry.

This brilliant, clear, decisive figure, bred by the "Puritan strain", had a love of elegance seldom equalled both in her life and in her poetry. She claimed that she got her love of elegance from her refined Philadelphia mother but that she also had a "johnny-cake side" from her "up-state" Pennsylvania father that made her enjoy "loungin' round". Her work is both beautiful and

delightful for she puts the best there is in her in it. She never stoops to the mean, petty or coarse and her thinking is of the finest quality.

> "Her jewelled brain defied the claims of the flesh and challenged the claims of the spirit; it dramatized and adorned the hazards of life."

We can see this dramatization and adornment in

> "The coldest crucibles of pain."

It is claimed that Mrs. Wylie's service for American Literature resembled that of Rosetti for his generation, and that of Gautier for his following and that of the first imagists for their pioneer readers. It is also claimed that her work contrasted with the work of her contemporaries as the

> "cut gem with the skyscraper of art."

William Rose Benet places her in the newer school of poets and says that she bridged the gap between the Romantic expansionists of the nineteen-twenties and the Classicists of the nineteen-thirties.

All of her work is a study in art, in fine intellectual thought and in manner of expression. The passion in which she conceived her poems and the skill in which she executed them deserve the greatest praise.

> "O harrowed young woman with the hollow breast and the sarcastic sigil on your brow - you seem to tell so much and yet how little you really reveal!"

The Prose

of

Elinor Wylie

Elinor Wylie, the poet who has left us a legacy of four volumes of poetry, rich in beauty, fire and passionate restraint - poems that set forth in a sane and sound way her philosophy of life, love and death, has likewise bequeathed to us four volumes of prose that will surely live forever.

Influenced by her husband, William Rose Benet, she reluctantly took up the writing of prose, such as no one else has ever written. When she began her first book, Jennifer Lorn, she told Mr. Benet that she had found a certain way to write but that she did not know where it came from. She admitted that she wrote very easily in the style which later became her characteristic style, so it would seem that she made no attempt to develop a particular style of writing. It was evidently lying dormant in her mind, just waiting for expression, and when she once gave way to the spirit, it flowed forth through an easy channel as a charming poetic prose, full of rhythm and music, full of imagery, erudition and precision.

Jennifer Lorn

Jennifer Lorn, or Jenny Forlorn, which she subtitled "A Sedate Extravaganza", is a novel directed against the activities and tendencies of the late eighteenth century. So artfully does the writer carry the reader into this period, which forms the setting for her book, that he finds it not difficult to believe the story.

Here we find a delightful enumeration of the adventures of the Honourable Gerald Poynyard, the heir to a barony, the "fine flower of English gentlemen", the young aristocrat, who departed with his "enchanting" bride, Jennifer, for India. The story hinges about Gerald. It would be next to impossible to find elsewhere such a character as Gerald, so odd and so original and yet so powerfully drawn is it. He is vain-glorious, self-important, proud, the epitome of conceit. He is a clever, skillful specimen of a person who can be highly polished and refined and yet when he desires can be cruel, heartless and selfish to the extreme. He wants to be considered an Atheist and shows his contempt for religion.

When Warren Hastings became Governor-General of India in 1773, Gerald was associated with him in a subordinate way. He became a scheming henchman and stole a large fortune in India. He was a proud horseman and could swing to the step of the elephant in a dignified way also. He appeared to Jennifer as her Prince before the ruins of Persepolis as the magnificent one "bearing himself with such an air of elegance and pride that the very column lowering over his mortality seemed somewhat dwarfed by the perfection of his poise." He was the perfect gentleman who read "Candide" and drank brandy to relieve the monotony of the sea voyage. He took delight in entertaining his wife with stories about her own family on their honeymoon and dictated to her the food she should eat and the clothes she should wear and yet the retiring little Jennifer pronounced him the "most superior

traveling companion" she had ever known. This egotist, in his calmness threw a pistol at bandits that had held him up, when his supply of ammunition was exhausted and then finished up the defense by fencing with his cane.

The story of Jennifer Lorn has a lovely background, and Mrs. Wylie has treated her characters with grace and wisdom. Her wit is excellent and her style is very choice. She impresses us with the idea that marriage is more or less a farce and that life is amusing, romantic and picturesque.

The many delightful details that gather about the incidents that are related in the book, give proof of the author's intimate knowledge of things as they existed in the period she is writing about. Throughout the book there is evidence that she felt the significance of accuracy even in the minutest details. We note her careful research, her deep insight and her powers of observation and interpretation. She has written her story in such a charming way that she convinces the reader of the authenticity of her knowledge.

Carl Van Vechten says of this book:

> "That there are certain resemblances to the work of Philip Thicknesse and others of the elegant eighteenth century biographers is a recognizable part of charm of this fine novel; that it is indebted now and again to the author's familiarity with the playfully heightened absurdities of Zuleika Dobson, the elaborate oriental pageantry of Vathek and the vivid narrative sense of the relators of The One Thousand and One Nights is unarguable. There is inherent in the book a curious fusion of diverse elements. The essential facts on which to lay emphasis ....is that the mixture is pervaded with the distilled essence of Elinor Wylie's own glamorous personality."

Mrs. Wylie seems to love Jennifer, and pities her for her weakness. Jennifer lacks the power to assert herself and is completely dominated by Gerald's personality. She is the romantic spirit that appeals to men but is subject to their whims.

Usually stories of this type are written chiefly for the purpose of amusing the reader but this one has a wider mission. It is witty, full of beauty, educational, polished in language. It is written with excellent precision, is original in treatment, shows a splendid style of writing, of which the author is always in entire command. She sympathetically identifies herself with Gerald and has made him a very powerful character. There is no question but that this book is a permanent masterpiece.

Carl Van Vechten says that it is "an extensive and sustained narrative of high comedy" and he claims that it is the only "successfully sustained satire in English" that he knows.

The Venetian Glass Nephew

This book, the most fantastic of all Mrs. Wylie's writings is a parable of the marriage of Art and Nature - Christian Art and Pagan Nature. It is a striking mingling of the real with the fictitious. It is, in reality, a concealed allegory of two natures, an eighteenth century moral novel.

The story is set in Venice during the gay and tinsel age, at the time when Venice was paling away before the French enlightenment. Here ghost-like figures move dimly in the misty old palaces and real personages such as Count Gozzi, Cardinal de Bernis, M. de Chasteneuf or Casanova are introduced into the fable but with imaginary characters of other people.

It is a story of Cardinal Peter Innocent Bon, who, having observed the great pleasure that other priests have with their nephews, desired one of his own. Being too simple to figure out how they get the nephews, of which he is so envious, he appeals to an old magician and glass-blower, Casanova, to give him the protege he has not been able to have.

Casanova, by means of his white magic and skill in glass-blowing, brings forth into being the glass nephew, who is christened Virginio. The boy is a fragile invention but pleases the old uncle. In time, however, the boy of Art falls in love with Rosalba, the girl of Nature, and Casanova is kept busy mending broken arms, for Virginio's composition is too brittle to withstand the embraces he wants to give

Rosalba. The glass boy can love but he cannot adapt himself to love-making, to his great disappointment. Rosalba shows her devotion to him by entering a furnace at Sevres and having Casanova, by means of his magic, change her over into a porcelain lady in order that she might become a suitable bride for Virginio. By this act we note that Nature has to yield to Art. Nature gets the sympathy but skill goes hand in hand with Art.

Cardinal Peter represents that state of beauty and perfection that might exist after the disappearance of paganism, in the very beginning of christianity before it began to be corrupt. He was able to sum up the beauty of the moment before the Renaissance had completely vanished.

Casanova, the boastful old man, carries over to his hearers the same dullness and weariness that was depressing the city, tired and worn out with dazzling splendor. This character, brilliantly drawn, represents the historical character of M. de Chastelneuf.

Rosalba is a vivid contract to Virginio. She was

> "a flame whose consummation may be bitter, but whose promissory blooming is tenderer than apple blossoms .... she was imagined flowers to breathe, velvet to touch, cream to taste ... and to the listening ear, a melody repeated by a mocking-bird."

Erudition is a striking characteristic of the book. From beginning to end, this sad, pathetic and wise fable is filled with rich allusions, Greek mythology, historical references, realism and a careful recital of the customs and conditions of the times. All these being exquisitely interwoven in the story, attach to it real and genuine embellishments.

The pictures she draws with such precision that they are plainly visible to the eye and indelibly impressive to the mind. These fascinating pictures generally have historical backgrounds.

The Glass Nephew is more than a pleasing fantasy. It is a whimsical story, excellently written, full of delicate and subtle humor. At times she handles her material delicately and we are struck with the sweetness of it; then she begins to work in her irony and bitterness. The irony, however, she often tried to conceal by her solemn and serious narration. Her seriousness tends to make the scene credible. The story, simple in narration and original in idea and development, resurrects the colorful decadent period of Voltaire. The interest of the book depends upon the way she has told her story. It is full of color and beauty, her language is both witty and elegant. Not only is her style precise but the material she uses, such as knowledge of churches, streets, events, dates, customs and costumes are all correct.

Critics have said that the "imagery is too copious" and it retards the progress of the action; that the "luxuriance of her phrases" are more appropriate to poetry than to prose; that so "much supernatural and whimsical stuff" is objectionable; that the plot has not been carefully formed because she draws so much attention in the beginning to the Cardinal, who is not a main character; that the long conversations between the Cardinal, the Chevalier and the Count, which covers about one-third of the book, is too long-drawn-out, and to no purpose; that it is rather hard to imagine as well as

repugnant to reason, that a young woman should be changed over in a ceramic furnace to procelain even with the aid of the Devil to satisfy the whims of a young man. They also claim that if we take the book literally, it is absurd; if allegorically, it is licentious. Be that as it may, as we close the book we feel that Art has triumphed over Nature, both ironically and ridiculously.

The Orphan Angel

Many readers of Mrs. Wylie's prose consider this her best work. It is a book that may be read simply as an adventure and it is pleasing as such; it may be read for the beautiful style in which it is written and in this it would delight; it may be read as an excellent interpretation of the character of Shelley, and it would appeal strongly to his admirers. No matter in whatever attitude of mind it is read, it will be considered an intensely interesting, well-written book and a masterpiece of wit and wisdom.

Acquaintances of Mrs. Wylie claim that she knew Shelley's life "as one remembers the past" and that she saturated her mind with his poetry, his letters and his biographies and absorbed the pompousness that so characterized the man. She gives a good portrayal of the character of Shelley, and she has so carefully, so delicately and so accurately characterized him in this indirect way that we wonder if any critic has done it more satisfactorily in a direct way. Every detail of characterization is well maintained and justifiable. Her information and evidence can not be excelled.

The story begins with the rescue of Shiloh, the poet Shelley, by David Butternut, of the American Clipper "Witch of the West" off the Leghorn Harbor on the stormy eighth of July, 1822. Shiloh was very glad to be carried to America for he was disappointed in love. Because of various circumstances the poet did not wish to let himself be known

in the new country. After landing in Boston, he and David start westward across the continent of America and finally land in San Diego. On the trip, she omits no details to make the experience real and accurate. The mode of travel, the conditions, the time, the food, the many experiences might all have taken place just exactly as she has given them.

It is written in a background of wildernesses, Indians, pioneers, frontier girls, whiskey-drinking Davids, snowstorms, wild turkeys. There are interesting incidents and adventures that tend to make the trip more authentic, such as Shiloh drifting down the Ohio River on a log-raft, with a philosopher and a mathematician, the wilderness wedding, the Indian stake, the rifle-match. One beautiful picture throughout is the journey across continent in search of Jasper Cross's sister, Sylvia La Croix. This is really the thread that connects the whole story. There is a great collection of details connected with the early history of America woven into the book, such as could only have been gained by the most careful research.

The chivalry of the gallant gentleman, Shiloh, led him into many adventures with the Indians, pioneers, and women, with snowstorms and many hardships, but through it all he always shows the same gay and happy spirit that runs throughout his poems. Shiloh is sometimes very learned, and sometimes quite naive. However, he is the writer's ideal and she makes him a fine and rich personality. As a romantic

character and poetic genius, Shiloh is very satisfying. The author traces his influence after his death, although for the sake of the story she does not let him drown but has the storm remove him from his previous situation. It was after Europe had rejected him that he crossed the Atlantic to reach America. As a free spirit he was reconciled to the crude and simple life of freedom which he found on the western frontier.

Stephen Benet notes that Mrs. Wylie has knit together three threads that go to make the novel one complete whole - one strand is the spirit with a strong passion for liberty in a world where it cannot be found - another is the knight-errant who attempts to rescue princesses from dragons without regarding the dangers connected with such deeds - the third is the lost America of rivers, forests and native Indians as it resides in our memories.

Mrs. Wylie recognized herself in the character of David and felt what she was accustomed to refer to as the "Johnny-cake side" of her life, the American side, her heritage from her father.

The Orphan Angel is the longest of Mrs. Wylie's novels. No doubt she did not wish to feel cramped when drawing the picture of the one person in the world whom she deeply admired, and, too, this is the only one of her books that has an American background. With this book she has brought something rare and fine into American Literature. It is the work of a poet and should be read more for its poetic value than for the story. Poetic ideas are here

clothed in prose to meet the demand of the Age of Fiction. The sketches she has drawn of the Indian, his nature and his language all add local color. The style is rhythmic and musical. It is crowded with beautiful figures when the emotion rises toward beauty. She always uses the right and forciful word and her sentences show what a genius can do with language. Isabel Paterson characterizes this book as

"Shelley's own prose."

Mr. Hodge and Mr. Hazard

This book, Mrs. Wylie's last, is considered by some as being a supplementary book to "The Orphan Angel" giving the closing chapters of Shelley's life. Miss Isabel Paterson, the New York critic says that this novel is the story of the absence of Shelley and his spirit from England. It tends to portray a generalized type of poet, however, rather than a specific one.

Mr. Hazard is a character built up to represent the Last of the Great Romantics and he is Mrs. Wylie's ideal, no doubt. It was after England had rejected Shelley that Mr. Hazard returned to England from fifteen years of wandering in the East and Miss Paterson identifies him with Byron or Trelawny. He had been cast off by his family for his early follies and spent much time in Greece where they tried to make him king. Although he was now but forty years of age, he had grown old and appeared as a kind of ghost. He still had the power to feel and appreciate but he could not any longer create. He was quiet, secluded and moved in a kind of "elegiac" atmosphere. Severe lessons of adversity had made him outwardly composed.

He found a new England upon his return, one that had changed completely. The old aristocracy which loved poets of his type was gone. The middle class - a bourgeois class of shopkeepers, had replaced it. He found only one old friend left - Mr. Harleigh, identified as Leigh Hunt - a survivor of the Romantic movement, who together with his descendents became

the first of the Victorians. He did not enjoy the man's hospitality and was glad to get away from the servile ways of such men. He went into the country and visited with Lady Clara Hunting, a daughter of Lord Camphile of the East India Company. Mr. Hazard had met Lady Clara in Venice soon after his return from the Greek Rebellion. She was very humane, well-bred and liberal minded. Her kind indulgence with Mr. Hazard soon won his love. She thought him a harmless gentleman, quite eccentric but very agreeable and was amused by him, as well as flattered by him. She admitted that he was "an absurd creature with great talents." She pitied him for having been forced to lead such a miserable life out of his proper environment and that now at so early an age he was a broken-down man. He was very satisfied at Lady Clara's home until Mr. Hodge broke into his haven of peace. Hodge had been the secretary to Lord Camphile and had been passed on to Clara to attend to her business; he also acted as tutor to her children.

Mr. Hodge was rude, coarse-grained, matter-of-fact, sort of fellow. He had business ability but bad manners. To Hodge, Mr. Hazard seemed a "horrid apparition", "an odd, appaling person", one who had "contemptible opinions and outrageous principles." He hated Mr. Hazard and thought him "unEnglish" and he lost no opportunity to try to poison the atmosphere for him. He represents the rising business class from its worst side, the plain business man, the schoolmaster. Miss Paterson says that he is "just the sort of man who would try to shut out genius."

In her books, Mrs. Wylie conceived the idea of combining modernism with eighteenth century matters and conditions. All of her books are more or less inter-related. They all have historical backgrounds and give evidence of a vast amount of research work in histories, memoirs, and travel books. In her prose we see the working of a mind that was capable of gathering odd facts which she wove into charming tales. She was ever intent on color, on the choice and sound of words in her prose just as she was in her poetry. Satire, revealed or concealed, is noticeable in all her novels. Her prose resembles poetry in its rhythm, figures and elaborate description - Precision was her key-note. There are various impressions to be found of her prose from her readers. It appeals differently to different people.

C O M P A R I S O N

Emily Dickinson and Elinor Wylie

Poets feel the urge to express themselves for different reasons: to relieve that restless, gnawing feeling that stirs and disturbs their subconsciousness to its very depths; to shape their feelings into a beautifully polished rhythm; to write down what they have to say in such a way that those who read their verse may understand and enter into the spirit of it and be elated by its ingenious influence or be dejected with them in their hopeless despair. Most poets crave praise and public recognition and have a desire to present their thoughts in a way that will appeal most forcibly to the reading public. Those who are lacking in the inner urge try to embellish their verse without the impelling emotion. Those who are not blessed with the art of outward expression fail to win recognition because of their lack of poetic skill.

Emily Dickinson, of whom Hamilton Aide wrote:

"She narrowly missed being the most distinguished poet her country produced", was one who had no desire to have her poetry published. Each poem is an expression of a sincere feeling. Not a paper was found after her death that would cause one to think that she had ever written a poem with the idea of publication. Had it not been for her relatives, who collected the fragments of her writings, her voice would have been stilled forever with her death and her existence would never have been known except to a few friends in a very narrow circle. The flame within burned steadily

but somehow she did not turn out a polished verse. Whether she had not the power or whether she was not inclined to use that power, if she had it, we do not know. Clement Wood says that she was content to create the jewel and leave it rough but that her jewels were so many that it might have taken all her time and energy to simply create them. This critic said:

> "It may have been that she polished toward exact fidelity to her vision, rather than toward accepted poetic music."

Elinor Wylie wrote for publication. She was so intent on it that she sat up and arranged for publication, the night before she died, her "Angels and Earthly Creatures." She did not always show creative ability, not to the extent that Miss Dickinson did, but she gave rhythm and form to her poetry. She did not take the easy course and use the type of writing that was being used at the time in which she wrote, but her work shows a freedom and flexibility that was not commonly used previous to her time. This is not so apparent in her earlier poems as in her later ones. She became farther sighted and more and more intense in her later poems. It is hard to determine just what was the extent of her impelling force and how much she appropriated and incorporated into her own from other sources. She was a master of technique and was able to absorb many of the moral and literary influences of her time. Because of this fact many claim that her work is uneven and lacks style for she had no fixed opinions.

Mrs. Wylie apparently had rhythm uppermost in her mind and into this rhythm she built up her passion. She showed

herself to be a clever artist by the way in which she bent around her words to suit her purpose. Her mind was always fixed upon the form of every image and feeling and she had the gift of being able to use the right word and she did it in a most forcible way. Even her worst poems have fine technical form and perfect metre. She made her technique bring forth all she demanded of it but she did not express the things that we most look for in poetry of great merit. The thought was not always of value and her expression was too highly polished. Her mind was more occupied with the external form. Mr. Benet says that she frequently completed whole poems in her mind and reshaped and revised them without the use of pencil or paper. She worked them into form and held them in her mind until she was ready to write them down in final order.

Miss Dickinson used the language of common speech but she made the exact word convey her meaning and she never decorated her verse with high sounding words. The two things that made her short poems so effective were the exact word and the perfect image, which we see illustrated in the little poem that follows:

Like brooms of steel
The Snow and Wind
Had swept the Winter Street
The House was hooked,
The Sun sent out
Faint Deputies of heat.....

She used words in an individual way, often giving them a new meaning. The meaning very often is concealed and hard to get. The difficulty in understanding her writing is not due to complex thought or intellectualism, but to her concise and indi-

vidual expression. Some one has said that she tested and sorted her words like a wine-taster tests his wine in his cellar. Not just one word came to her but many from which she could choose, and they were seldom synonyms. At times as many as twenty or even more words were found in the margins of the manuscripts of her poems to take the place of the one she used. Of a word, she says:

> A little overflowing word,
> That any hearing had inferred
> For ardor or for tear,
> Though Generations pass away,
> Traditions ripen and decay,
> As eloquent appears.

A good example of her forceful words used to present a striking simile is found in the poem on the snake:

> A narrow fellow in the grass
> Occasionally rides;
> You may have met him - did you not?
> His notice sudden is.
>
> The grass divides as with a comb,
> A spotted shaft is seen;
> And then it closes at your feet
> And opens further on.
>
> .....

This poem has been likened to "Tiger, Tiger, Tiger ,..." written by William Blake. The second stanza is a fine picture of a moving snake. Many of her nature poems are surprising for their imagery and their figures of speech.

In the following poem the movement contained in the words suggests the forward movement of the snake:

> Then, to a rhythm slim
> Secreted in his form,
> As patterns swim
> Projecting him.

We can actually feel the wriggling of the snake that is con-

tained in the words themselves.

Although her poems are often weird and mysterious in their wording, there is still a charm about them. She is said to have studied the dictionary as a text-book and always had plenty of words at her command although it would seem that as soon as a thought flashed through her mind, she tried to write it down in as few words as possible. Often the reader is left to interpret her verse as best he can for she does not always use enough words to make the meaning clear. The one quality that characterizes her poetry more than any other is her concise and condensed expression. It is possible and also probable that some of her poems were written so as to reveal her feelings too plainly and she purposely changed them so as to make her expression more mystifying, and this, in a way, may account for her many abbreviated and syncopated lines.

Miss Dickinson, also, wrote with great freedom, which is noticeable not only in the outer form of her work but in the unconventional and daring thought that often underlies her verse. Almost all her poems are written in short measures, and the effect of brevity is increased by her scantiness of words. She resorts to ellipses, to inversions, to epigrams, and her unexpected climaxes are often surprising and misleading. Her poems are full of real thought, though simple and spontaneous, but she pays no attention to the accepted rules of rhyme and scansion. Assonance is pronounced, however, but it is not always close assonance. Ruskins once said:

> "No weight, nor mass, nor beauty of execution
> can outweigh one grain of fragment of thought."

This can, without question, apply to Miss Dickinson's poetry.

She herself has given expression to the same thought in a little stanza:

> The pedigree of honey
> Does not concern the bee.
> A clover any time to him
> Is aristocracy!

The form of rhythm that pleased Mrs. Wylie most was the staccato rhythm and she used it in many poems. This swift-moving step gives her a chance to use to advantage her original rhymes which are very effective, clever and at times witty. She used this staccato rhythm in "Peregrin", the longest poem in her second book. She increased it into tetrameter in "Miranda's Supper", in her third book. It was the longest poem she ever wrote. In "Peregrine" she wrote, for example:

> He loved fiddles;
> He talked with rustics;
> Life was riddles
> And queer acostics.

In the poem, "Fire and Sleet and Candlelight", taken from Nets to Catch the Wind, there are the following outstanding characteristics: the exact rhyme-scheme, the short balanced lines, the effective word, the preciseness and the polish and skill that characterized so adequately the writings of Mrs. Wylie. Here are four of the eight stanzas:

> For this you've striven
> Daring to fail:
> Your sky is riven
> Like a tearing veil.
>
> For this, you've wasted
> Wings of your youth;
> Divined and tasted
> Bitter springs of truth.
>
> .....

Your race is ended -
See, it is run:
Nothing is mended
Under the sun.

Straight as an arrow
You fall to a sleep
Not too narrow
And not too deep.

In this type of verse we note the masculine effect that is able to carry the interwoven thoughts of her poems powerfully. Her technique is excellent, so firm, so fine-cut.

Since these two women reflected their lives in their writings, it is in order to give a brief idea of how they lived and what were their tendencies in life. They were very different types of women. Their tastes, their manner of living and their friends were different. Mrs. Wylie was fastidious, luxurious and spent money lavishly and inconsiderately. As a girl she was delicate, insolent, spoiled and fond of all sorts of frivolous dissipation. Even as she grew up into womanhood she continued to manifest an impulsive, spontaneous and headlong nature. She had the upbringing of a society girl and was married three times. She caused the suicide of her first husband, who was unable to endure the scandal she caused by her elopement with Mr. Wylie, whom she married several years afterward, after a second elopement with him, but later divorced. Her life, as well as her art, was extraordinary. She was proud and vain, yet humble and real; she was frivolous and she was serious; she was a victim of tragedy and she was a master of arts. The characteristics she manifests in her verse are recognized by her friends as being the same that she manifested in her life.

The fastidiousness in her work was reflected in her real life to the extreme. Her friends speak of her "Innocence of mind and her impulsive warmth of heart." They say that she was a keen wit and could apply wit and imagination to the most familiar and ordinary happenings but we know of no instances where her wit was ever applied to the Deity.

There is little known about the life of Emily Dickinson. It was not an open book like that of Mrs. Wylie. There was a great deal of mystery about her life that obsured her writings. As a young girl she was said to have been vivacious, romantic and as frivolous as any girl her age. She was brought up under the dictates of an old-fashioned, narrow-minded, straight-laced New England father and no one could imagine a life more cramped than the one she lived as a girl. Her only diversions were house parties, picnics, church sociables and such things as were the fashion in a small village life in the Puritanical days. We could hardly imagine her as being fastidious, luxurious or of her spending money lavishly. She probably never had any of her own to spend. Such things would not have fitted into the atmosphere in which she lived.

Like Mrs. Wylie, she was spontaneous and headlong possibly, but it did not get her into trouble. She was very secretive and hid her feelings as well as her actions, while Mrs. Wylie carried out her plans, openly defying social traditions. Her life as well as her poetry was, also, unusual and her life characteristics were manifested in her verse. We do not discover pride and vanity shown in her writings,

although we know that she must have thought well of herself to have doomed the knee-wearied , titled gentleman to remain forever outside her portals. She displays no frivolity, as a woman, but an active, contradictory spirit that can be gay as well as serious, rebellious and meek, solemn and witty, religious and mocking. Mrs. Wylie exhibited no duality of mind or life as Miss Dickinson did.

She began writing apparently when she was about eighteen but she had renounced the world and completely withdrawn from life by the time she was thirty-two, while Mrs. Wylie only began to write in earnest when she was about thirty-four. Mrs. Wylie was known as a socialite but Miss Dickinson was referred to as a queer, mysterious woman who was on the verge of insanity. Mrs. Wylie also retired, after her escapades, and devoted her life untiringly to writing but she did not live the life of a prisoner as Miss Dickinson did. Unfortunate love affairs were probably the motives back of their writing.

Mrs. Wylie also wrote prose; Miss Dickinson wrote only poetry. Mrs. Wylie's novels are said to be the work of a "fastidious and fanciful poet." They have the style of poetry. Her individual style of writing is more pronounced in her poetry. At the time she began her "chiseled verse", and worked it out to the greatest degree of perfection, the style of the novel was that of loose realism and every writer was using free verse. Her verse seems to be an anachronism, and to belong to a very "meticulous age." Her poems are short

and true to life. She attempts no deception. She shapes and polishes them with the greatest care and this was a most sudden innovation in the early part of the Twentieth Century when readers were easily pleased with poetical works, as well as with prose. Prose at that time was nothing but ordinary journalism.

Miss Dickinson's poetry deals primarily with herself, with nature and with Time and Eternity. She shows her keen vision of the little things about her as well as the things appertaining to future life. The subjects of her poems are life, hope, joy, memory, faith and love and death; each one is carefully, vividly and beautifully expressed. She never judged her visions in terms of material value. In her poems the wind is an unwelcome visitor, the storm rages through her lines, the summer makes its light escape, the snow sifts down with leaden sieves to powder the woods and fill the wrinkles of the road with alabaster wool. The grass, the clover, the mushroom, the gentian, the rose - she handles them all gracefully. Of the rose she said:

> I had rather dwell like her
> Than be Duke of Exeter.
> Royalty enough for me
> To subdue the bumble-bee!

The snake writhes across her book; it crawls at her feet. The bluebird, the oriole and the robin all find expression in her, and her song is as sweet as theirs:

> Forever cherished be the tree,
> Whose apple Winter warm,
> Enticed to breakfast from the sky
> Two Gabriels yestermorn;
> They registered in Nature's book
> As Robin - Sire and Son,

But angels have that modest way
To screen them from renown.

Many of her poems deal with the commonplace things in life but they all express living ideas. Some one has said of her that she reverses the usual and "hitches her star to the waggon", transferring homely, daily phrases for poetic purposes.

Mrs. Wylie's poems include such subjects as puddles roofed with glass, coldest crucibles of pain, bronze, broken arrows, autumn frost, crystal cups, the rain's cold grains, sorrowful faces, fingers of hate, steel and a lens of crystal. She speaks through her well-formed verse with sharp and clear distinction and she handles her images, psychology, emotions, and irony well and never gives us an idea of sophistication. Some lines that follow illustrate the kind of thought she expressed:

Full as a crystal cut with drink
Is my cell with dreams, and quiet and cool....

also

The rain's cold grains are silver-gray
Sharp as golden sands

also

Sorrowful faces worn
As stone with rain
Faces writhing with scorn
And sullen with pain.

We do not find Mrs. Wylie alive with nature subjects as Miss Dickinson is but she is extremely sensitive to injustices or what she considers as such and this underlies a large part of her verse. Herself and her experiences reecho through her poems and with not a little bitterness. Miss Dickinson's mind was completely absorbed in life, its passions, love, hope, despair and her insight into life, whether of Nature or of man,

was extraordinary. Although she loved Nature and has written many beautiful poems about it, her interpretations are more or less influenced by her feelings. To her Nature was a healing balm, and her contact with it brought her relief from her material surroundings that often caused her pain and suffering. To her everything in Nature was a divine symbol. There are many brilliant and beautiful poems in her books on bird-life and flower-life, but occasionally she will treat them with a sort of childish fancy. On the cricket, she wrote:

Farther in the summer than the birds,
Pathetic from the grass,
A minor nation celebrates
Its unobtrusive mass.

No ordinance is seen,
So gradual the grace,
A pensive custom it becomes,
Enlarging loneliness.

She was a very sensitive observer. In the poem that follows we note the effect that nature had upon her:

There's a certain slant of light,
On wintry afternoons,
That oppresses like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

.....

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath;
When it goes, 'tis like the distance
On the look of death.

She has used her words in a very forcible way in this poem. Her sunset pictures are beautiful enough to hang in a golden frame and she wrote a number of them. Here is one of them:

I'll tell you how the sun arose -
A ribbon at a time.
The steeples swam in amethyst
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,
The bobolinks begun.
Then I said softly to myself,
"That must have been the sun!"

But how he set, I know not.
There seemed a purple stile
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other side,
A dominie in gray
Put gently up the evening bars,
And led the flock away.

This poem shows her keen appreciation of the beauty of nature. She gets her inspiration from direct contact with nature. She feels the significance of color, lines and movements of nature. She experiences all the effects just as a painter would and the impressions that these things make upon her create her different moods. From the most commonplace she could work up a romantic vision and express it vividly, simply and charmingly.

Mrs. Wylie's poetry has but little of the charm that is characteristic of Miss Dickinson's, nor has it much of the feminine quality. Her mind did not have the same individual way of taking hold of her material and nature had no appeal to her. Her mind worked best when she made use of allegory and ignored the real subject. Some critics go so far as to claim that Mrs. Wylie had no style, that her writing was uneven. We observe that the same mind could pen the poem that follows as well as the Hymn to Earth and they are so different in character that they do not seem to have been written by the same person:

O love, how utterly am I bereaved
By Time, who sucks the honey of our days,

Sets sickles to our Aprils and betrays
To killing winter all the sun achieved!

We do not get the evenness of tone and the same kind of perception that comes from a mind that has a single way of grasping its material.

Mrs. Wylie was witty and exceedingly clever and she seemed to find a certain satisfaction in the irony she was accustomed to use but her moods do not noticeably affect her verse. Her moods, humors and temperament do not predominate in her work. Whatever sentiment she may have is taken up with her imagination. In some of her moods she has been compared to Robert Frost but her technique is decidedly different. She seemed to write so little out of mood, or out of passing emotion as so many people do and as Miss Dickinson did so much. Most always her thought is deep and involved with her own intimate experiences, which made some of her poetry very hard to understand.

In one mood she would imagine herself as Peregrine who would "cross a monsoon to chase vagaries" and then in another she would lay herself down in death "in silver coverlid and clothing beside my brother, Thomas Browne." It is usually a grave and melancholy mind we see working in her but occasionally there is a bit of playfulness and often strong emotion beneath the surface. Miss Dickinson was a poet of moods and she lived in her imagination. She could feel passionately about imagined experiences as well as about her contacts with real life. She was blessed with an agile and tireless imaginative faculty and her imagination often carried her to great heights. Finding the world of reality empty, she filled the

emptiness with creations from her own mind and this was the most real thing to her that she knew - her imagination. It made her existence satisfying and she felt beauty and significance deeply when her feeling was in harmony with the forces of nature. No matter what object speaks through her, her prevailing mood is pain. She was glad to be alive although she could not see any promise of relief from her pain, but this did not make her bitter against God. Grief and disappointment were a faith and not a misfortune to her. She accepted life bravely. She experienced the tragic feeling when she wrote:

> My life closed twice before its close;
> It yet remains to see
> If Immortality unveil
> A third event to me,
>
> So huge, so hopeless to conceive,
> As these that twice befell.
> Parting is all we know of heaven,
> And all we need of hell.

Here we see the mystic telling us that separation is both the greatest joy and the deepest anguish.

Mrs. Wylie shows that she has felt the tragedy of life and has been almost crushed by its stroke but she tries to crawl out from under the oppression to adorn and beautify it. After having experienced all the earthly pleasures that she was heir to, she subtly wrote:

> Mortality has wearied us who wear it,
> And they are wiser creatures who have shunned
> This miry world, this slough of Man's despond,
> To fortify the skies we shall inherit.

Most of her poems give the impression that she is conscious of the fact that she is doomed to an early death and this

knowledge, no doubt gave her a more tragic view of life. The scandals of her early life came back to haunt her in her later years and still her love poems show fearless courage in the midst of her heart trials. These early experiences made a deep impression upon her mind and disturbed her so that she wanted to retreat from social contact. This is the reason for her satire, which, however, was more or less restrained and careless and she was never cynical. Her poetry is often tragic but it is never depressing. She manages to keep her colors flying and she takes courage because the falcon's eyes and the lion's heart have been stolen, or is it because her metaphysical mind was strong enough to overcome the seeming and supply her with courage sufficient to keep her intellect working? Such an idea is conveyed in the lines that follow from her poem "Valentine" :

Before my heart is dust
At the end of all
Eat it, I must, I must,
Were it bitter gall.

But I shall keep it sweet
By some strange art;
Wild honey I shall eat
When I eat my heart.

Other stanzas of this same poem reflect her bitterness:

Too high, too high to pluck
My heart shall swing.
A fruit no bee shall suck,
No wasp shall sting.

Before my eyes are blind
And my lips mute,
I must eat core and rind
Of that same fruit.

We note still further her bitterness in the poem "The Eagle and the Mole" :

If you would keep your soul
From spotted light or sound,
Live like the velvet mole;
Go burrow under ground.

And there hold intercourse
With roots of trees and stones,
With rivers at their source,
And disembodied bones.

It is unusual to find the bitterness that was so common with Mrs. Wylie, expressed in Miss Dickinson's verse, But we sense a bit of it in the poem where she refers to her obsession by the thought of death:

The long sigh of the frog
Upon a Summer's day,
Enacts intoxication
Upon the revery.
But his receding swell
Substantiates a peace,
That makes the ear inordinate
For corporal release.

Miss Dickinson was sensitive to irony and both humor and pathos are found in her verse. She shows them in the way she has accepted the truths of life. Humor is noticeable both in thought and in expression. Her imagination had a way of lighting upon the truth that her reason had not. In the poem on the butterfly we see the wit of Miss Dickinson turning into a bit of satire, which is most unusual. She seems to be hiding behind the butterfly as she writes. We have to imagine her as a vivacious and rebellious little girl to fully appreciate or at least to thoroughly understand this poem, which is quoted below:

The butterfly obtains
But little sympathy,
Though favorably mentioned
In Entomology.
Because he travels freely
And wears a proper coat,
The circumspect are certain

That he is dissolute.
Had he the homely scutcheons of modest Industry,
'Twere fitter certifying for Immortality.

In some of Miss Dickinson's poems her love takes a religious trend as in the poem where she refers to

"The day when I was crowned."

In the poem about the two lovers, she takes an objective view of the theme:

Till those two troubled little clocks
Ticked softly into one.

But she is much stronger when more subjective as she usually is: An example of the latter is:

Alter? When the hills do.
Falter? When the sun
Question if his glory
Be the perfect one.

Surfeit? When the daffodil
Doth of the dew:
Even as herself, O friend!
I will of you!

She wrote this poem and yet she cannot trust love. She fears that if paradise is once entered that it will no longer be paradise. Here we have the manifestation of the duality of mind that Mrs. Wylie did not possess.

Mrs. Wylie's writings show that she was dominated by a great spiritual force which had its peculiar manifestation in her. She associated herself with no religion although she had a strong faith in God and the Good. She, like Miss Dickinson, disliked orthodoxy but she was interested in metaphysics, and was keen to defend spiritual truths and principles. It was probably her application of her metaphysical knowledge that permitted her to endure her

suffering, both mental and physical, with the courageous heart that she showed. Her writings show that she suffered deeply from her experiences, but they also show that she was remarkably courageous and had an intellectual purity that was wonderful. She wrote:

> And while I live I'll call Him Mighty,
> Yea, and Eloquent, and Just,
> And scratch in earth "Integer Vitae"
> And "Dolce Mors" upon the dust.

Many of Emily Dickinson's poems were methods of registering her spiritual experiences. She lived almost wholly in a world not material and gave spiritual interpretation often to concrete forms. She was always seeking to discover the inner truths of life and her intuitive insight into the deeper things gave her an exalted vision of various kinds of existence. She often seems irreverent but we know that she had a dual mind and recognized God as Supreme. She treated him more as an intimate friend than as a Spiritual Father. Colonel Higginson said that Emily looked through Nature's God with a very "Emersonian self-possession" and treated him more as an earthly father than as a spiritual one. A preacher once said of her:

> "I bless God for Emily - some of her writings have had a more profound influence on my life than anything else that any one has ever written."

She had her own peculiar idea of God and theology could not change her. She lived with Him continually in the things about her. The tenor of her poems is so different when taken collectively that there is something in them to appeal to all classes of readers. None of them are lacking in merit

and many are choice. Her poems take hold of us because we recognize her power for grasping things of everyday life, love and death and her faculty for presenting her thought in a charming way. A critic once said that:

> "Her poems lack glass and decorative adornment, but alive with some activity at the centre."

Another critic said:

> "She perfected a style gem-like and idiomatic, lucid and flawless, terse, pat, vitalized."

She never indulged in vague generalities but confined her thoughts to the specific, the precise and definite and made her images clear, and she always expressed thought.

Many critics claim that Mrs. Wylie's poetry is too intellectual and too metaphysical to be appreciated by the general reader, and that some of her poems have no significance at all. In the poem "Address to My Soul" there is "emptiness." The thought that is stretched out over three stanzas might well have been expressed in one:

> Fear not, pathetic flame;
> Your sustenance is doubt:
> Glassed in translucent dream
> They cannot snuff you out.
>
> Wear water or a mask
> Of unapparent cloud;
> Be brave and never ask
> A more defunctive shroud.
>
> The universal points
> Are shrunk into a flower;
> Between its delicate joints
> Chaos keeps no power.

The lines are pleasing to the ear but the forms of the flame, the water, the shroud and the flower through which she puts her soul do not give power to the thought she wants to express. Another criticism that is made on her poerty is that she conceals

her emotions more or less by her artificial way of dealing with them. They are too deeply engrounded beneath the surface. As stated previously coldness has been the most universal criticism but there is ardor in the stanza that follows, which she wrote knowing that death was not far away:

> Upon your heart, which is the heart of all
> My late discovered earth and early sky,
> Give me the dearest privilege to die;
> Your pity for the velvet of my pall
> Your patience for my grave's inviolate wall.

Her artificiality may be explained by the fact that her form was of more importance to her than the expression of emotion.

The aesthetic is not pronounced in either writer. It was never the aim of Miss Dickinson, for to her poetry was the expression of vital meaning, of deep conviction, of passionate feeling and she never used finely-coined phrases to produce her effect, or tried to express art for art's sake. At times Mrs. Wylie indulges in a crystal type of verse, and we do not know just why. It may be for the purpose of enlivening her mind, or for getting a balanced result, as some think. We notice very little of the aesthetic in her but if she had lived and written longer, she might have developed this more. It is questionable, however.

In Mrs. Wylie's poems there is none of the

> "sharp stabbing quality which disturbs and overthrows the spiritual ease of the reader"

as Martha Shackford claims that Miss Dickinson's verse shows.

We see the unnatural in both these writers. Mrs. Wylie was loud in her praise of integrity, but she did not show any degree of respect for it and did not live up to her convictions.

She admits this in the introductions to her Angels and Earthly Creatures and we also see it in her adventurous exploitation of the exotic. Mr. Tate, in his symposium, refers to "the subtle interfusion of the exotic in Emily, the unexpected but essential reinforcement of her symbols, and its relevance to the emotional capacities of a mind which required no mysterious lover for realization." The exotic in Miss Dickinson has been the subject of many literary criticisms. Her modes of thought were exotic and strangely mixed with the modes of thought that had come down to her from her Anglo-Saxon ancestors.

A few points that have not been previously drawn out in this comparison, will now be included in a general summing up:

Of the two writers Miss Dickinson showed greater imaginative and intuitive power. To her a leaf, a flower, a tree, a sunset would perhaps become the whole horizon; in the buzz of a bee or in the song of a bird she might hear an entire story. It was easy for her to step boldly from realism into distant flights of the imagination and what she saw and heard appealed deeply to her senses. Her writings were the true recordings of her feelings and her reactions to the small things about her as well as to the larger things of life. She saw beauty and significance in nature and her feelings and thoughts were deep. She showed intense joy at life, its vivid color and its movements in its various phases of existence, but neverthe-

less she often turned away from it to seek relief from it in solitude, with God. She was a mystic and turned to her faith within. She always took herself very seriously and regarded as cosmic events some of the most casual fancies. She is usually subjective and is stronger when she is so, although at times she is objective. Her poetry shows a feminine quality and charm, but the diction of some of her poems is strong, direct, and almost masculine in vigor.

Mrs. Wylie has a masculine mind, but the method of her verse is feminine. She has written some in the objective, but mostly in the subjective. She was no mystic and did not dwell so much in the imagination. Nature did not appeal to her as it did to Miss Dickinson and we note that she did not show interest in it. She also has profound feeling and deep thought but she suggests rather than expresses her feelings and leaves it to the reader to interpret them. She did not express joy at life but conveys the idea that she is continually trying to escape from the crowd, from life, from everything. In her retirement she was bitter and nursed her injured feelings. Her mind was on herself more than on anything else. She was an adept at self-portrayal and self-characterization but treated herself impersonally. She speaks her heart about her own fate and her history but in a very subtle way. We note a tendency often for her to make a subtle plea for sympathy and understanding. She was very witty and ironical in varying degrees but rarely satirical.

Humor and pathos are common with Miss Dickinson. She had a wit that was often directed toward the Deity that made her seem irreverent at times. She is not usually satirical but sometimes her wit is turned that way. Her writings were greatly affected by her moods. She was whimsical and had a more critical trend of mind than Mrs. Wylie. She had a strong creative mind for beauty and loveliness, and was more original in thought than Mrs. Wylie. She had a sharp and probing mind, was restless and searching and tried to analyze whatever she saw.

Mrs. Wylie lacked creative ability and had a tendency toward pastiche. Her thought was usually interwoven with her personal feelings. She did not have an inquisitive mind and we do not see her digging deeply for hidden truths. She did not depend so much upon divine guidance or go to the Source as Miss Dickinson was accustomed to do. The latter took a more religious view of things and found God in everything all about her. We find a note of despair in Mrs. Wylie's poetry, also a tendency for her to handle her subject often in an allegorical way. Neither of these shows up in Miss Dickinson's work. Both write more or less in a melancholic strain, but there is an unhappy overtone in most all of Mrs. Wylie's poetry. They both write lyrics.

Miss Dickinson's verse is characterized by simplicity, her quick sensibility to respond to her emotional moods, imagistic qualities. She never indulges in description for its own sake, and many of the subjects

she wrote about were such commonplace things that they often shocked the aesthetic sense of the reader. No one ever showed such liberties with diction and rhythm as she showed. She was preoccupied with the inner life, with God, with eternity, with death. She was dual minded decidedly. She had a tendency for uniting the material and the spiritual. Her poetry is very hard to understand at times because of her extremely condensed form and scarcity of words. She did not work with abstractions and did not attempt philosophy. She wrote the modern way long before it was the style among others and she was so far ahead of her contemporaries that her writing had no effect upon them. She had a very unconventional and bizarre mind. She disliked anything conventional - people, language or verse.

Mrs. Wylie did not so much dislike conventionality but when she came to write her best verse, she found that the unconventional form would not give her the free expression that she desired, so she adopted her own form. Miss Dickinson so disliked stock poeticism that she would not even use rhyme. Half or more of her closing sounds are near-rhymes, or assonances.

Mrs. Wylie's verse is characterized by excellence of thought, intellectual beauty, preciseness of form, clear diction, direct expression, deep thought, a fondness for subtle statements, coldness, although her later poems show a love, tenderness and pure Emotion. She generally tries to conceal her emotions and there is never any sentimentality

shown in her verse. Her work is cleverly done, highly polished and her poems artistic. Her few attempts at philosophy showed a weakness, the same as she did in some of her highly polished verse that was empty, devoid of thought. She wrote epigrams and often worked with abstractions. She wrote much in the old traditional form of sonnet but her sonnets are unusual and they have easy lines. At times her poems are very hard to understand because of their subtle allusions or statements, and because of her intellectual style. With her as with Miss Dickinson we note the Puritan instinct for simple experiences.

Neither one of these writers was interested in orthodoxy. Mrs. Wylie both read and practised metaphysics to some extent but Miss Dickinson had a religion all her own. She built up her life-philosophy along the lines of her "Consolation upside-down." This was knowing light by experiencing darkness: knowing success by defeat, taste by desire, fullness by hunger. She believed that success was sweetest to those who had not attained it; that life was beauty; that love explained grief; that Immortality endured forever. In short, it was a philosophy that taught that out of apparent contradictions and inharmonies, the subtlest harmonies might spring forth and this thought she expressed in its various forms throughout her verse. She wrote:

"To learn the transport by the pain".

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Both Miss Dickinson and Mrs. Wylie, each in her own way, have rendered a great service to our modern poetry. They have been instrumental in helping to lift it up to its present standard and many of their poems will always stand out among the most beautiful gems of our American literature.

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